



DEBATE PACK

Number CDP 2020/0138, 17 November 2020

Backbench Business: International Men's Day

Summary

There will be a Backbench Business Committee debate in the Chamber on International Men's Day, Thursday 19 November 2020. The debate is sponsored jointly by Philip Davies MP and Ben Bradley MP.

There have been four previous debates on International Men's Day: [2015](#) (Westminster Hall); [2016](#) (Commons Chamber); [2017](#) (Westminster Hall); and [2018](#) (Westminster Hall).

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.

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1. Background

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

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). The UK has the most International Men's Day events than anywhere else in the world.

In the UK, International Men's Day is overseen by the [Men and Boys Coalition](#), a registered charity consisting of 100 organisations, academics and professionals who believe in a society that values the wellbeing of men and boys.

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.

[...]

In the UK, International Men's Day has three positive themes:

- Making a positive difference to the wellbeing and lives of men and boys
- Raising awareness and/or funds for charities supporting men and boys' wellbeing
- Promoting a positive conversation about men, manhood and masculinity

[...]

These core themes help to address some of the issues that affect men and boys in the UK such as:

- The high male suicide rate
- The challenges faced by boys and men at all stages of education including attainment and re-skilling
- Men's health (including male cancers), shorter life expectancy, infertility 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

1.1 Health

International Men's Day UK aims to address a number of health issues that affect men and boys in the UK such as the high male suicide and workplace death rate, and shorter overall life expectancy. Life expectancy at birth is 3.7 years lower for men than women – 79.4 for men and 83.1 for women.¹

Some diseases, like prostate cancer, are more prevalent amongst males, mainly affecting men over the age of 55. While the numbers of men diagnosed has increased due to the ageing population, five-year survival for prostate cancer is higher than for most other cancers.² 10,867 men died from prostate cancer in England and Wales in 2019. The age-standardised mortality rate from prostate cancer has changed little since 2013.³

It has also been widely noted that male sex (together with a range of other demographic factors) has also been associated with higher risk of Covid-19-related hospitalisation and mortality. Men make up 55% of deaths from Covid-19 in the UK registered by 6 November 2020 (35,010 of 63,874 total deaths).⁴ Public Health England state that it is not yet fully clear what drives the differences in outcomes between males and females but has noted some possible factors:

Some could be driven by different risks of acquiring the infection – for example due to behavioural and occupational factors – and by differences in how women and men develop symptoms, access care and are diagnosed, or by biological and immune differences that put men at greater risk.⁵

1.2 Male suicide and self-harm

In England in 2019 there were 4,303 deaths among men where the cause was determined as suicide. Suicide death rates among men are three times higher than among women.

In 2019, the suicide rate among in both genders was the highest recorded since the first years of the millennium. However, rates among men remain 12% below those recorded in 1981 (compared with 50% lower than 1981 among women).

The male suicide rate is highest among ages 45-49, 50-54, and 40-44. Over the period shown in the chart below there has been a substantial fall in male suicide rates among age groups over 65.

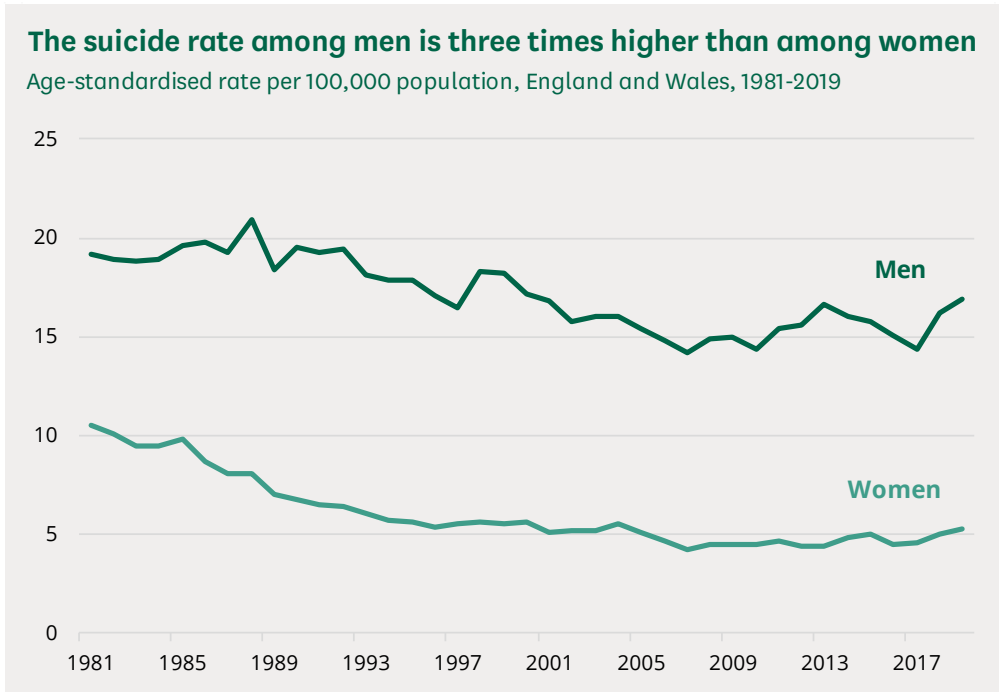
¹ ONS, [Life Expectancy in the UK](#)

² [PO127147. Prostate Cancer. 26 February 2018](#)

³ Mortality statistics accessed via [NOMIS](#)

⁴ ONS, [COVID-19 weekly deaths](#)

⁵ Public Health England, [Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19](#), August 2020



Source: [ONS, Suicide in England and Wales](#)

These figures record deaths registered during the year shown. Deaths will not always be registered in the year in which they occurred.

The gender patterns for intentional self-harm are not the same as for suicide. In England in 2018/19 there were just under 40,000 men admitted to hospital for intentional self-harm in England, compared with just under 70,000 women.⁶ The number and rate of self-harm admissions has fallen among men over the past eight years but has not fallen among women.

Public Health England's guidance [Local suicide prevention planning: a practice resource](#) (January 2020) notes that there are a range of factors associated with suicide that are particularly common in men. These include depression, especially when it is untreated or undiagnosed, including in older people; alcohol and drug misuse; unemployment; family and relationship problems; social isolation and low self-esteem. Actions to address the impact of these risk factors and to encourage men to seek help is vital in order to effectively reach men.⁷

Research carried out for Time to Change found that men are less likely than women to seek help or talk about suicidal feelings and can be reluctant to engage with health and other support services.⁸

The Government published its latest progress report on the suicide prevention strategy in January 2019, entitled [Preventing suicide in England: fourth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives](#). This was accompanied by the Government's first cross-government [suicide prevention workplan](#) committing "every area

⁶ Public Health England, [Fingertips data](#)

⁷ Public Health England, [Local suicide prevention planning: a practice resource](#), January 2020, section 5.1.1

⁸ Gov.uk, [Preventing suicide in England: fourth progress report of the cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives](#), January 2019

of Government to taking action on suicide”, and to implement the suicide prevention strategy.

Public Health England’s [Local suicide prevention planning: a practice resource](#) includes sections on tailoring prevention approaches towards reducing suicide risk in high-risk groups such as men.

The [cross-government suicide prevention workplan](#) also states that local areas should develop strong local partnerships and implement effective ways of engaging with men. It notes that NHS England has worked with Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure that the ‘first wave’ of £25 million ‘transformation funding’, allocated to eight local areas in 2018/19, is testing different approaches to reaching men in local communities as part of the multi-agency suicide prevention partnerships.

[The NHS Long Term Plan’s Mental Health Implementation Plan](#) (July 2019) sets out our plans to invest £57 million in suicide prevention, with investment in all areas of the country by 2023/24 to support local suicide prevention plans and establish suicide bereavement support services.

The latest suicide prevention plans from the devolved administrations are:

- Scottish Government – [Suicide Prevention Action Plan: Every Life Matters](#), August 2018;
- Welsh Government – [Talk to me 2: Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Strategy for Wales 2015-2020](#), June 2015; and
- Northern Ireland Department of Health – [Protect Life 2: Strategy for Preventing Suicide and Self Harm in Northern Ireland 2019-2024](#), September 2019.

Further reading on men and mental health can be found on the [Mental Health Foundation website](#) and the [Men’s Health Forum report, Delivering Male: Effective practice in male mental health](#) (2011).

1.3 Education

Early years

In July 2016, the charity, Save the Children, published a report, [The Lost Boys](#).⁹ This argued that boys were falling behind in language and communication skills by the time they started primary schooling, with boys nearly twice as likely to fall behind as girls. The report called for a focus on disadvantaged boys in particular, because of “just how many are struggling.”¹⁰ The report’s main recommendation was for investment in high quality early education and childcare provision, led by graduates.

Children in England are assessed at the end of the first year of schooling – the reception year - using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. In 2019, **78.4% of girls** achieved a good level of development, compared

⁹ Save the Children, [The Lost Boys](#), August 2016.

¹⁰ As above, p. iv.

to **65.5% of boys**. However, on this measure, the gender gap has been closing over time; in 2013, the gap was 16.0 percentage points, and by 2019 it had reduced to 12.9 percentage points.¹¹

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

Schooling

Girls have outperformed boys at GCSE level in England for many years.

In 2019, the latest year for which data is available, **61.0%** of boys and **68.4%** of girls achieved a grade 9-4 pass in both English and maths. This is known as a standard pass, broadly equivalent to the old grades A* to C. The gap between boys' and girls' performance on this measure has reduced slightly in recent years, from 9.8 percentage points in 2012/13 to 7.4 percentage points in 2018/19.¹²

Progress 8 is a headline school performance measure, taking into account pupils' prior attainment and the progress schools make with their pupils between the end of primary education and the end of the GCSE phase. 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 2019 the average Progress 8 score for boys was **-0.27**, compared to **+0.22** for girls. This gap is statistically significant and suggests that boys not only achieve less well on threshold measures such as pass rates for English and maths GCSEs, but also on average make less progress than girls at secondary school.¹³

Higher education

In March 2020, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published [a briefing](#), looking at gender gaps in higher education (HE). Key points included:

- In 2017/18, **44.1% of young men** were participating in HE, whilst the figure for **young women was 56.6%**.
- However, there were significant gender gaps in subjects studied, with men much more likely than women to study most Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects.¹⁴

A more recent HEPI report (12 November 2020) on the graduate gender pay gap noted:

The most recent data show that, in 2018/19, women accounted for 58% of undergraduate entrants and men only 42%; yet men now account for 51.5% of the 18-year old age group. The relative underperformance of men is marked, enduring and growing.

¹¹ Department for Education, [Early years foundation stage profile results: 2018 to 2019](#), (17 October 2019).

¹² Department for Education, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revised\)](#), 6 February 2020, national tables, characteristics summary table.

¹³ As above.

¹⁴ HEPI, [Mind the gap: gender differences in higher education](#), 7 March 2020.

Nevertheless, despite having outperformed men all the way through the education system, on leaving higher education, women are likely to be earning less than men on average.¹⁵

Further statistics about gender disparities in HE can be found in another Library briefing paper, [Higher education student numbers](#).

Government policy

On 19 April 2019, Nadhim Zahawi responded to a [PQ](#) about improving educational outcomes for white, working class boys:

This government is committed to delivering a high-performing education system in which all pupils, regardless of their background, ethnicity or gender, have the opportunity to go as far as their hard work will take them.

We know that the proportion of children in good or outstanding schools rose from 66% in 2010 to 85% by the end of December 2018, in part due to our reforms – and that the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, measured by the department's attainment gap index, has narrowed by 13.2% at the end of key stage 2 and 9.5% at the end of key stage 4 since 2011. But we also know that the average attainment of white boys – and also girls – who are eligible for free school meals remains unacceptably low.

Addressing the educational effects of disadvantage is a priority for the department. We are continuing to provide pupil premium funding – worth more than £2.4 billion in 2018-19 – to help schools improve the progress, attainment and other outcomes of their disadvantaged pupils. White working class boys and girls form the largest group of eligible pupils and so benefit significantly from this extra support. Our recently introduced national funding formula for schools also takes account of socio-economic disadvantage – and low prior attainment – in allocating funding to schools. We have also invested over £137 million in the Education Endowment Foundation, to identify what works to improve disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and to make this evidence readily available to schools, colleges and early years providers.

We are targeting extra support at some of the poorest areas of the country to raise standards in schools, through our £72 million Opportunity Areas and £24 million Opportunity North East programmes.

We are also working to make sure that more disadvantaged young people can benefit from higher education. In our latest guidance, published in February of this year, we have asked the Office for Students to continue in its efforts to secure greater and faster progress in ensuring that students from disadvantaged and under-represented groups – including students from white working class backgrounds – can not only access but also successfully participate in higher education.¹⁶

1.4 Rough sleeping

Despite considerable efforts, the official annual rough sleeper counts in England showed increases every year after new methodology was introduced in autumn 2010 up to the autumn 2017 count. The results

¹⁵ HEPI, [Mind the \(Graduate Gender Pay\) Gap](#), 12 November 2020.

¹⁶ [PQ 240957](#), 19 April 2020.

of the 2017 count were published on 25 January 2018 – a 169% increase in the number of people sleeping rough in England since 2010 was recorded. The recorded number of rough sleepers then fell by 2% in 2018 and a further 9% in 2019, although the 2019 count still represented a 141% increase on the 1,768 recorded in 2010. A total of 4,266 rough sleepers were recorded in 2019, of whom just over a quarter were in London.

The majority of people sleeping rough in England are male, aged over 26 years old and from the UK. Of the 4,266 rough sleepers identified in [autumn 2019 count](#), 83% (3,534) 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 2019 and March 2020 10,726 people were seen sleeping rough by outreach workers in London. Gender was recorded for 10,559 rough sleepers, of which 8,801 (83%) were male. The [CHAIN report for 2019/20](#) records:

The gender breakdown of people seen rough sleeping in 2019/20 is broadly consistent with that in 2018/19. However, across the last ten years there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of people seen rough sleeping who are women, with 17% in 2019/20 compared to 10% in 2010/11. (section 4.5)

Of people seen sleeping rough over 2019/20 in London 129 UK nationals were recorded as having experience in the armed forces; 582 had previous experience of living in care; and 2,050 had experience of serving time in prison.

In terms of support needs, the [2019/20 report](#) states:

The most frequently reported support need amongst people seen rough sleeping in 2019/20 was mental health, with 47% of those assessed during the period having a need in this area. 39% of people assessed had a support need relating to alcohol, with the same proportion also found to have a support need around drug use. Two-fifths (40%) of those assessed were found to have more than one of the three support needs, while just under a quarter (23%) had no support needs in these areas. (section 4.8)

The [Conservative Manifesto December 2019](#) **committed to ending "the blight of rough sleeping by the end of the next Parliament"** through an extension of the Rough Sleeping Initiative, Housing First and using local services to meet the health and housing needs of people living on the streets. On publication of the 2019 rough sleeper counts in February 2020, the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, announced additional funding and a review of rough sleeping to be conducted by Dame Louise Casey. A further increase in funding to tackle rough sleeping was announced as part of Budget 2020.

For more information see the Library briefing paper: [Rough sleeping \(England\)](#).

1.5 Domestic abuse

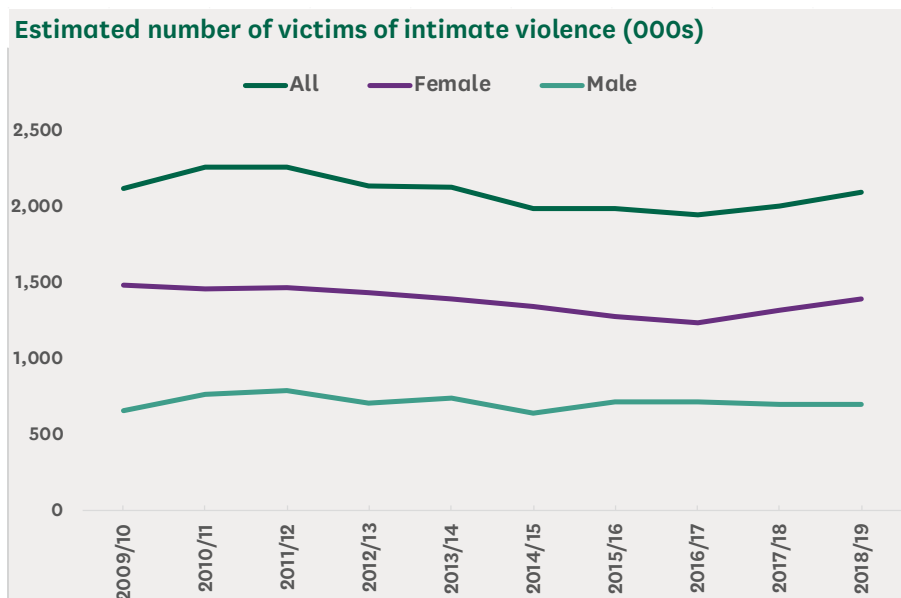
England and Wales

The most reliable estimates of the extent of domestic violence come from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW). Headline figures for 16 to 74 year olds are presented below for 2018/19 and longer term trends for 16 to 59 year olds are provided in the chart below and the appendix tables of the Library Paper: [Domestic Abuse Bill 2019-20](#).

The CSEW estimates of domestic abuse¹⁷ are based on a relatively broad definition covering male and female victims of partner or family non-physical abuse, threats, force, sexual assault or stalking. The latest statistics show that:¹⁸

- Some 7.5% of women and 3.8% of men aged 16 to 74 were estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in 2018/19, equivalent to an estimated 1.6 million female and 786,000 male victims.
- Overall, 28% of women and 14% of men aged 16 to 74 had experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16. These figures were equivalent to an estimated 6.0 million female and 2.9 million male victims.

The chart below shows the estimated number of victims of any kind of domestic abuse aged 16 to 59 reported in the CSEW from year ending March 2010:¹⁹



¹⁷ Domestic abuse includes non-physical abuse, threats, force, sexual assault or stalking carried out by a current or former partner or other family member.

¹⁸ ONS, [Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2019](#), 25 November 2019

¹⁹ Data is not available for year ending March 2008

Levels of domestic abuse have generally declined over the past decade. In the year ending March 2005 there were approximately 2.7m victims aged 16 to 59 compared to just under 2.1m in the year 2018/19 - a reduction of 23%.

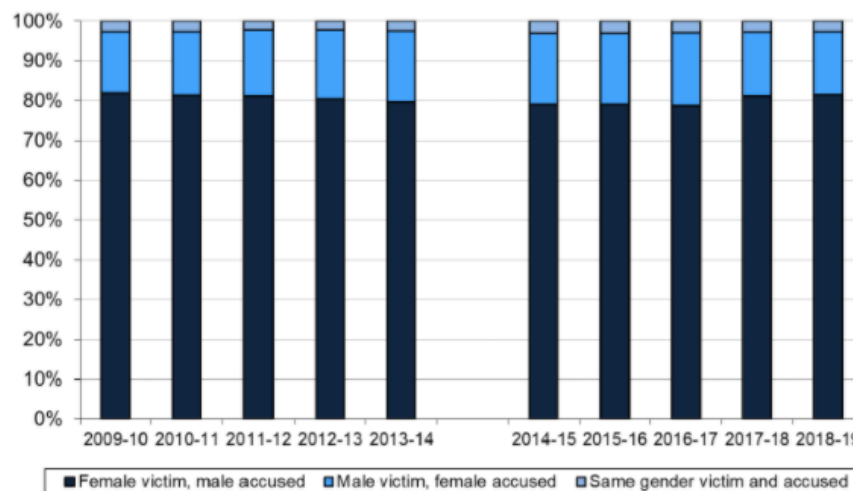
Scotland

Statistics on domestic abuse in Scotland can be found in [Domestic Abuse Recorded by the Police in Scotland, 2018-19](#). In 2018-19, there were 60,641 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police. The bulletin accompanying the statistics also shows that:

“2.16. Where the victim’s gender was known, the clear majority of victims in 2018-19 (83%) were female. Around four out of every five incidents (82%) of domestic abuse in 2018-19 had a female victim and a male accused. This proportion is similar to the previous year but is a slight rise since 2014-15.

2.17. Again, where the victim’s gender was known, 17% of victims in 2018-19 were male. In 2018-19, 16% of domestic abuse incidents involved a male victim and a female accused. Again, this proportion has remained stable since 2011-12 (ranging from 16% to 18%) (Chart 4 & Table 6)”.

Chart 4: Gender of victim and accused ¹, where known, 2009-10 to 2018-19 ²

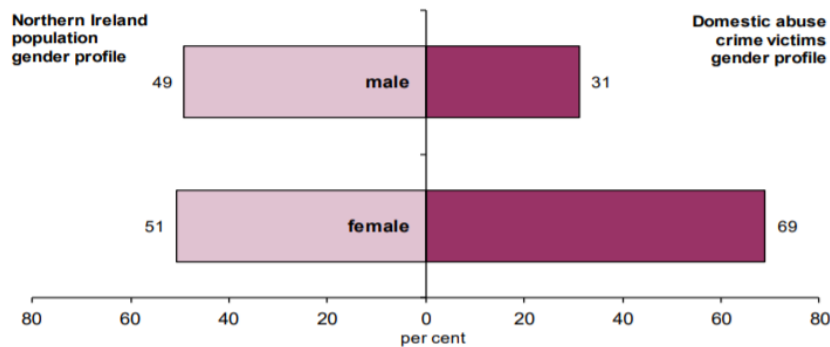


Northern Ireland

Statistics on domestic abuse in Northern Ireland are updated regularly and can be found in [Domestic Abuse Statistics](#).

The gender profile of victims shows that, in the year to March 2019, 69% of victims were female while 31% were male:

Figure 3.4 Gender profile of victims of domestic abuse crimes compared with Northern Ireland population profile, 2018/19



Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland, [Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2018/19](#), 08 November 2019.

Over 85% of offenders were male and under 14% female.

The [latest update](#) shows that in the twelve months to 30 June 2020 there were 32,127 domestic abuse incidents recorded in Northern Ireland, an increase of 2% on the previous twelve months and the highest twelve month period recorded since the start of the data series in 2004/05.

1.6 Shared parenting

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*.

Under changes made in 2014,²⁰ the legislation also requires a court, when considering whether to make, vary or discharge a child arrangements order and the making of the order is opposed, to presume, unless the contrary is shown, that the involvement of each parent in the life of the child concerned will further the child's welfare. There are exceptions to the provision where parental involvement would put the child at risk of suffering harm.²¹

The then Government explained in 2014, however, that the purpose of the new provision was not to promote an equal division of a child's time between separated parents but to:

... reinforce the importance of children having an ongoing relationship with both parents after family separation, where that is safe and in the child's best interests. [...] The effect is to require the court, in making decisions on contested section 8 orders, the contested variation or discharge of such orders or the award or removal of parental responsibility, to presume that a child's

²⁰ The provision was inserted into the Children Act 1989 by section 11 of the Children and Families Act 2014 and came into force in October 2014. Further details of how the provision developed are set out in Library papers written during the passage of the Bill: [RP13/11](#) and [RP13/32](#).

²¹ *Children Act 1989*, sections 2A and 2B.

welfare will be furthered by the involvement of each of the child's parents in his or her life, unless it can be shown that such involvement would not in fact further the child's welfare.

Involvement means any kind of direct or indirect involvement but not any particular division of the child's time.²²

In June 2019, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice, Paul Maynard, was asked what the Government was doing to ensure that fathers can have regular contact with their children:

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con)

A recent survey found that many divorced or separated fathers are being prevented from staying in touch with their children despite indirect contact orders from the courts. What steps are the Government taking to ensure that fathers can have regular and meaningful contact with their children in such cases?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Paul Maynard)

I am grateful for that question, and I am genuinely sympathetic towards those in such situations. Family breakdown always takes a toll on those involved, whether parents or children, but the child's welfare is paramount in court decisions about their upbringing. The law remains gender-neutral and presumes that a parent's involvement in a child's life is beneficial unless there is evidence to the contrary.²³

Further information is provided in Library Briefing 8761, [Children: child arrangements orders – when agreement cannot be reached on contact and residence \(Great Britain\)](#).

Information on the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on separated families is available in Library Briefing 8901, [Coronavirus: Separated Families and Contact with Children in Care FAQs \(UK\)](#).

Parental alienation

As set out above, when a court is considering whether to make, vary or discharge a child arrangements order, one factor it may take into account is the wishes and feelings of the child concerned. It is therefore important that those views are the child's alone, and have been not influenced by a parent, for example. One area of potential relevance in this regard is parental alienation.

Cafcass, the Government's Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) which represents children in family court cases in England, explains that "the definition of parental alienation as a concept in family court cases, its surrounding terminology and its scale remain under debate". It adds:

While there is no single definition, **we recognise parental alienation as when a child's resistance or hostility towards one parent is not justified and is the result of psychological manipulation by the other parent**. It is one of a number of reasons why a child may reject or resist spending time with one parent post-separation. All potential risk factors, such as domestic

²² *Children and Families Act 2014*, [Explanatory Notes](#), para 105

²³ [HC Deb 4 June 2019, c19](#).

abuse, must be adequately and safely considered, reduced or resolved before assessing the other case factors or reasons.²⁴

Further information is available in Library Briefing 8763, [Children: parental alienation and the role of Cafcass \(England\)](#).

²⁴ Cafcass, [Parental alienation – What is parental alienation?](#), webpage accessed on 16 November 2020 (emphasis in original).

2. Media

2.1 Press releases

[Emergency accommodation for London's male victims fleeing domestic abuse](#)

Respect, 25.08.2020

2.2 Articles and blogs

[New HIV diagnoses in gay and bisexual men at their lowest in 20 years](#)

Independent Nurse, 06.11.2020

[Our work on men's mental health](#)

Mental Health Foundation, 31.10.2020

[White working-class pupils suffering due to 'status deficit', MPs told](#)

Guardian, 13.10.2020

[Black men are twice as likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer. Help us find out why.](#)

Prostate Cancer UK, 09.10.2020

[The 'taboo' about who doesn't go to university](#)

BBC, 26.09.2020

[Male domestic abuse victims 'sleeping in cars and tents'](#)

BBC, 23.09.2020

[Seek help, men urged as suicides hit 20-year high](#)

The Times, 02.09.2020

[Male suicide rate hits two-decade high in England and Wales](#)

Guardian, 01.09.2020

[The lost boys: the white working class is being left behind](#)

The Spectator, 18.07.2020

[F4J Father's Day letter to Prime Minister calls for help for male victims of domestic abuse and for contact denial & parental alienation to be made criminal offences](#)

Fathers 4 Justice, 20.06.2020

[Male victims of domestic abuse face barriers to accessing support services – new study](#)

The Conversation, 12.06.2019

[Separated couples exploiting virus lockdown to stop ex-partner seeing children could face court action, says judge](#)

The Sun, 22.04.2020

[Lack of affordable housing 'forcing councils to leave people homeless'](#)

Socialcare.today, 10.03.2020

[The idea that family courts are biased against men is a dangerous fallacy](#)

Guardian, 05.03.2020

[It's time to give white, working class boys a fair shot in life](#)

The House, 12.02.2020

[Is Britain failing its white working class boys?](#)

Ambition Institute, 05.02.2020

[Evidence, not stereotypes, will help white working-class boys succeed](#)

Schools Week, 12.01.2020

[Male rape survivors suffer in silence. We need to help them talk](#)

Guardian, 16.01.2020

[The health of our men and boys: Homo-heterogeneity](#)

Independent Nurse, 10.01.2020

[Reynhard Sinaga: 'Evil sexual predator' jailed for life for 136 rapes](#)

BBC, 06.01.2020

[Poor white boys are underdogs of the education system](#)

Times, 30.12.2019

[Men are putting up with pain or illness instead of seeing a GP – Why?](#)

HuffPost, 26.11.2019

[Raising the profile of men's health](#)

The Lancet, Volume 394, Issue 10211, p1779, November 16, 2019

3. Parliamentary material

3.1 Early day motions

Walk and Talk event supporting men's mental health and suicide prevention campaign

That this House recognises the Walk and Talk event taking place in Dundee on Friday 8 November 2019 to raise awareness of men's mental health issues and suicide prevention...

29 Oct 2019 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 81 (session 2019-19)

Primary sponsor: Gethins, Stephen

Men's health week

That this House notes that this week is Men's Health Forum Men's health week; encourages men to have conversations with their friends and family about physical and mental health; and, despite the coronavirus pandemic, urges anyone who is concerned about an aspect of health to contact their GP...

17 Jun 2020 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 618 (session 2019-21)

Primary sponsor: Shannon, Jim

Stonehouse Men's Shed

That this House congratulates Stonehouse Men's Shed on securing £9,500 funding from the National Lottery Awards for All Scotland; acknowledges that the group is part of a UK-wide network offering community-based support in a bid to tackle isolation and provide support and opportunity for older men who ...

12 Feb 2020 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 167 (session 2019-21)

Primary sponsor: Crawley, Angela

3.2 Debates

Education and Attainment of White Working-Class Boys

HC Deb 12 Feb 2020 | 671 cc311-321WH

International Men's Day

HC Deb 29 Nov 2018 | 650 cc221-242WH

3.3 Parliamentary questions

Domestic Abuse: Males

Asked by: Crosbie, Virginia

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support male victims of domestic abuse.

Answering member: Victoria Atkins | **Department:** Home Office

The Home Office is undertaking ambitious work to support all victims of Domestic Abuse, including male victims.

Since 2017/18 the Home Office has provided funding of £160,000 per year to the Men's Advice Line run by Respect which supports and advises male victims of domestic abuse. Additional funding of £151,000 was provided to further bolster the helpline earlier this year from the funding announced by the Home Secretary on April 11 in response to COVID-19 pressures.

In March 2019 the Home Office published the Male Victims Position Statement which sets out 12 specific commitments to better enable male victims and survivors to come forward and receive necessary support, and to tackle offenders. A copy of the statement can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-unveils-commitments-to-tackle-abuse-against-men>

More widely the Government announced £76 million for charities supporting victims of domestic and sexual abuse, amongst others.

Specific advice has been published on gov.uk for domestic abuse victims during COVID-19 directing them to a range of specialist organisations including those supporting male victims. The information also makes clear that stay at home orders do not apply where any victim needs to leave home to seek help if they are in danger of domestic abuse.

In April the Home Secretary launched a domestic abuse campaign, #YouAreNotAlone, to raise general awareness of domestic abuse during COVID-19 and signpost the support and advice available.

Our landmark Domestic Abuse Bill will help all victims to have the confidence to report their experiences, knowing they will be properly supported, and perpetrators brought to justice.

In the meantime, we are continuing to work closely with domestic abuse organisations, including male victim organisations, to assess ongoing trends and needs and to help support them through the period of new measures, building on the progress to date.

12 Nov 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 113269

Date tabled: 09 Nov 2020 | **Date for answer:** 12 Nov 2020 | **Date answered:** 12 Nov 2020

Paternity Leave and Pay: Public Consultation**Asked by:** Reynolds, Jonathan

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what progress his Department is making on its consultation on parental leave and pay which closed on 29 November 2019.

Answering member: Paul Scully | **Department:** Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

In 2019, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay and is currently analysing the responses it received. We separately commissioned large scale, representative, surveys of parents and employers to gather further information on the barriers and enablers to employees taking parental leave, including Paternity Leave, and data on how parental entitlements are used in practice.

Information gathered through the consultation and the evaluation of Shared Parental Leave and Pay will inform Government policy on parental leave and pay going forward – including the Manifesto commitment to make it easier for fathers to take Paternity Leave.

The findings of the evaluation and Government Response to the consultation will be published in due course.

22 Oct 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 103499

Date tabled: 14 Oct 2020 | **Date for answer:** 16 Oct 2020 | **Date answered:** 22 Oct 2020Suicide: Males**Asked by:** Offord, Dr Matthew

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the level of male suicides in each of the last three years.

Answering member: Ms Nadine Dorries | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

The Government takes male suicides very seriously and is working with partners to address the recent upward trend in male suicide registrations.

In 2018, the number of total suicide registrations in England increased significantly by 570 to 5,021. This increase was driven largely by male suicides. In 2019, the number of male suicide registrations was 5.7% higher than the total in 2018 (3,800 deaths) but this was not a statistically significant increase in the England male suicide rate.

Provisional quarter 1 data for 2020 is consistent with those figures observed in previous years, where the rate has seen an upward trend in

quarter one and a potential decrease in quarter 2 provisional suicide registrations, which may be due to COVID-19 related delays in reporting. Men aged 45 to 49 years continue to have the highest suicide rate of all age segments of men.

The annual suicide statistics published by Office for National Statistics reflect suicide registrations not actual suicides (i.e. these relate to dates when the suicide was registered rather than the date of the death itself). In England, all deaths caused by suicide are certified by a coroner following an inquest and cannot be registered until the inquest is completed, which can take months.

14 Sep 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 84213

Date tabled: 02 Sep 2020 | **Date for answer:** 07 Sep 2020 | **Date answered:** 14 Sep 2020

Life Expectancy

Asked by: Lord Rooker

To ask Her Majesty's Government what the average life expectancy in England (1) is currently, and (2) was in 2010.

Answering member: Lord True | **Department:** Cabinet Office

The information requested falls under the remit of the UK Statistics Authority. I have therefore asked the Authority to respond.

Dear Lord Rooker,

As National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Question asking what the average life expectancy in England (1) is currently, and (2) was in 2010 (**HL6324**).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the '*National life tables; England*' dataset[1] on 25 September 2019. The latest available figures show that period life expectancy at birth for the years 2016 to 2018 was 83.18 years for females and 79.56 years for males. The corresponding figures for the years 2008 to 2010 are 82.33 for females and 78.31 for males.

Period life expectancy assumes mortality rates remain constant into the future. For further information, please see '*Period and Cohort Life Expectancy Explained*'[2].

The bulletin published with the national life tables contains further information about these tables[3].

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir Ian Diamond

[1]<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/datasets/nationallifetablesenglandreferencetables>

[2]<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/methodologies/periodandcohortlifeexpectancyexplained>

[3]<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/bulletins/nationallifetablesunitedkingdom/2016to2018>

09 Jul 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL6324

Date tabled: 30 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 14 Jul 2020 | **Date answered:** 09 Jul 2020

Suicide: Males

Asked by: Day, Martyn

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he has taken to reduce the risk of suicide in middle-aged men on low incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Answering member: Ms Nadine Dorries | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

The NHS Long Term Plan's Mental Health Implementation Plan sets out our plans to invest £57 million in suicide prevention. This will see investment in all areas of the country by 2023/24 to support local suicide prevention plans and establish suicide bereavement support services. We have worked with NHS England to ensure that local areas use this funding to test approaches to reaching and engaging men.

The National Suicide Prevention Strategy highlights men, and especially middle-aged and young men, as a group at high risk of suicide, and in January 2019, we published the first cross-Government suicide prevention workplan. It includes sections on tailoring prevention approaches towards reducing suicide risk in high-risk groups such as men.

12 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 54973

Date tabled: 04 Jun 2020 | **Date for answer:** 08 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 12 Jun 2020

Domestic Abuse: Males

Asked by: Villiers, Theresa

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent discussions she has had with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police on domestic violence against men.

Answering member: Victoria Atkins | **Department:** Home Office

Domestic abuse is a devastating crime and the Government is committed to doing everything we can to tackle it. Domestic abuse affects men as well as women and last year we published a dedicated

male victims position statement to recognise the needs of male victims and to clarify and strengthen our response.

The Home Office funds the Men's Advice Line which provides support and advice to male victims of domestic abuse. This helpline received additional funding from the £2m announced by the Home Secretary on April 11 to bolster domestic abuse helplines during COVID-19. On 19 May the Home Office announced £2m of funding to charities with a national or regional presence which will provide further support for male and female victims of domestic abuse.

We have also provided £500,000 to improve support to male victims of domestic abuse and provided funding to Galop which provides advice and support to LGBT+ populations affected by domestic abuse, including for the National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline. This helpline also received additional funding from the £2m announced by the Home Secretary.

The Government domestic abuse awareness raising campaign under the hashtag #YouAreNotAlone, signposts victims to sources of advice and support. Details of these services can be found at www.gov.uk/domestic-abuse

The Home Office regularly engages with police forces on a wide range of domestic abuse issues.

02 Jun 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 48302

Date tabled: 18 May 2020 | **Date for answer:** 02 Jun 2020 | **Date answered:** 02 Jun 2020

Education: Males

Asked by: Norris, Alex

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the potential effect of a change from a competence-based curriculum to a knowledge-rich curriculum on the education attainment of white working class boys.

Answering member: Nick Gibb | **Department:** Department for Education

In 2014, the Department introduced a more knowledge-rich curriculum with associated reforms to GCSEs to make them more rigorous. These changes were in part driven by a desire to ensure all children, whatever their background, receive a high-quality education.

We have made no specific assessment of the impact of curriculum change alone on attainment of white working-class boys. However, against a background of rising standards, disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their peers. The attainment gap index shows the gap at the end of primary school has narrowed by 13% since 2011, and by 9% at the end of secondary school. This means better prospects for a

secure adult life for disadvantaged pupils. Our reforms, and the focus provided by the pupil premium, have supported this improvement.

09 Mar 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 24414

Date tabled: 03 Mar 2020 | **Date for answer:** 09 Mar 2020 | **Date answered:** 09 Mar 2020

Maternity Services

Asked by: Jayawardena, Mr Ranil

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if he will issue guidance to NHS Trusts to increase the provision for fathers staying with the mother and baby in hospital.

Answering member: Ms Nadine Dorries | **Department:** Department of Health and Social Care

It is important that fathers have time to bond with their baby and support their partner. 'Health Building Note 09-02: Maternity care facilities' sets out best practice guidance on the design and planning of healthcare facilities so that partners and other supporters feel welcome in maternity services. This includes the provision of overnight accommodation for partners within birthing spaces and postnatal rooms or close to the unit. Maternity services need to understand their local populations and develop local policies that enable fathers to support their partners as much as they want to whilst respecting the privacy of other women.

Parents of babies who may require neonatal critical care should also be supported to stay with their baby. The NHS Long Term Plan sets out how we will redesign and expand neonatal critical care services to improve the safety and effectiveness of services and experience of families.

24 Feb 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 15144

Date tabled: 13 Feb 2020 | **Date for answer:** 24 Feb 2020 | **Date answered:** 24 Feb 2020

Flexible Working

Asked by: Baroness Lister of Burtersett

Her Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to (1) adopt the EU's Work-life Balance Directive, (2) make paternity leave a day one right, (3) increase paternity pay, and (4) introduce eight weeks of paid parental leave as part of each parent's current unpaid 18-week entitlement.

Answering member: Lord Duncan of Springbank | **Department:** Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

The Government is committed to maintaining and enhancing workers' rights, and to supporting people to balance their work and caring responsibilities. This month we laid regulations in Parliament which will give grieving parents a right to paid time off work. We also committed in the Queen's Speech to bring forward an Employment Bill which will make it easier for fathers to take paternity leave; introduce a new entitlement to carer's leave; and to introduce a new entitlement to leave and pay for parents of children who spend time in neonatal care. We have recently consulted on high-level options for reforming parental leave and pay, including Paternity Leave and Pay and Unpaid Parental Leave, and will respond to this consultation in due course.

After we leave the EU, we will be able to set our own standards for workers' rights, and we intend to use this opportunity to make the UK the best place in the world to work.

04 Feb 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL698

Date tabled: 22 Jan 2020 | **Date for answer:** 05 Feb 2020 | **Date answered:** 04 Feb 2020

Education: Males

Asked by: Bradley, Ben

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to support working class boys to close the attainment gap.

Answering member: Nick Gibb | **Department:** Department for Education

Educational achievement is at the heart of this Government's commitment to ensure no young person is left behind because of the place or circumstances of their birth. Due to our reforms, 86% of pupils attend a Good or Outstanding school compared with 66% in 2010.

'Working class' is not a description recognised or measured by the Department. We measure the outcomes of those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds as defined by the benefit-related definition for 'disadvantaged'. We recognise that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds – including those currently or formerly claiming free school meals and currently or formerly looked after – may face extra challenges in achieving their potential at school. We introduced the pupil premium in 2011 and have invested over £15 billion – and another £2.4 billion this year – so that schools have the resources to provide extra support for disadvantaged pupils of all abilities. White disadvantaged boys and girls constitute the largest group of eligible pupils and so benefit significantly from this extra support.

Against a background of rising standards, disadvantaged pupils are catching up with their peers. The attainment gap index shows that since 2011, the gap at the end of primary school has narrowed by 13% and the gap at the end of secondary school has narrowed by 9%. This indicates better prospects for a secure adult life for disadvantaged

pupils. Our reforms, and the focus provided by the pupil premium, have supported this improvement.

The Department recognises there is more to do for disadvantaged pupils. Our ambition is to halve the number of children who finish Reception without the communication and reading skills they need to thrive. Our £72 million Opportunity Areas programme will focus resource on areas with low social mobility. We have also dedicated £24 million to Opportunity North East to address the specific challenges in that region.

The Department's establishment of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) with a £137 million grant has ensured that schools have access to high quality, evidence-based, effective practice drawn from hundreds of trials across England. We recommend that schools consult the EEF's resources, particularly its recent 'Pupil Premium Guide', when they are considering how best to support their pupils and close the attainment gap.

31 Jan 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 6162

Date tabled: 21 Jan 2020 | **Date for answer:** 23 Jan 2020 | **Date answered:** 31 Jan 2020

Rape

Asked by: West, Catherine

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she is taking to ensure that male victims of rape and sexual violence receive adequate support when they contact the police.

Answering member: Victoria Atkins | **Department:** Home Office

Rape and sexual violence are devastating crimes and the Government is committed to ensuring that every victim has access to the specialist support they need. We expect every report of sexual violence and rape to be treated seriously from the time it is reported, every victim to be treated with dignity, and every investigation and prosecution to be conducted thoroughly and professionally.

We are deeply concerned by drops in criminal justice outcomes for rape cases, which is why we are conducting a thorough end-to-end review into the criminal justice response to rape. This review will inform a cross-system Action Plan which will seek to reverse this trend and we have committed to publish this later this year.

The Government is providing £32 million in funding until 2022. This includes £4 million for rape support centres, and £1 million for recruiting more Independent Sexual Violence Advisers. This additional funding forms part of a Rape Victims' Pledge to make rape victims' engagement with the criminal justice system simpler and less distressing through providing targeted information and support.

Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) areas with Government-funded male support centres have nearly quadrupled from 11 in 2018/19 to 41 from 2019/20. This support is in addition to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) funded National Male Rape support helpline (Safeline) and Male Rape Support webchat service (Survivors UK). The Home Office provides specific funding to male victims of rape via Survivors Manchester through the £150,000 National Sexual Violence Support Fund.

MoJ have also provided £68 million to PCCs in 2019/20 to commission victim support services based on local need, including additional support for victims of sexual violence and abuse, which includes male victims.

13 Jan 2020 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 1425

Date tabled: 08 Jan 2020 | **Date for answer:** 13 Jan 2020 | **Date answered:** 13 Jan 2020

Life Expectancy

Asked by: Baroness Finlay of Llandaff

To ask Her Majesty's Government what recent assessment they have made of the reasons for the disparities in life expectancy between women and men.

Answering member: Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford |
Department: Department of Health and Social Care

Life expectancy in England is the highest it has ever been for both males and females. Women continue to live longer than men, as they do around the world, but the gap is reducing.

The difference in life expectancy at birth in England between males and females has decreased in every time period between 2001-03 and 2015-17. Over the past decade, the gap between male and female life expectancy at birth has narrowed from 4.1 years in 2006-08 to 3.6 years in 2016-18. Men experience higher mortality rates for some leading causes of death, including circulatory disease and cancer, which contribute to this difference in life expectancy.

04 Nov 2019 | Written questions | Answered | House of Lords | HL353

Date tabled: 23 Oct 2019 | **Date for answer:** 06 Nov 2019 | **Date answered:** 04 Nov 2019

3.4 Committee reports and evidence

Education Committee, [Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds](#), Oral evidence, 13 October 2020

Women and Equalities Committee on Mental health of men and boys
inquiry – oral and written evidence

4. Organisations and further reading

4.1 Further reading

Health

Public Health England, [*New HIV diagnoses in gay and bisexual men at their lowest in 20 years*](#), 03 November 2020

Raleigh, V., [*What is happening to life expectancy in the UK?*](#) The King's Fund, 26 June 2020

Elliott, M., Gillison, F. & Barnett, J. [*Exploring the influences on men's engagement with weight loss services: a qualitative study*](#). BMC Public Health 20, 249 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-8252-5>

The Men's Health Forum, [*Covid-19 Statistics \(England & Wales\) - Gender based statistics for Covid-19 deaths, last updated with ONS figures*](#), 04 November 2020

White, A., Seims, A., Cameron, I. et al. [*Social determinants of male health: a case study of Leeds, UK*](#). BMC Public Health 18, 160 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5076-7>

EuroHealthNet, [*Making the link: Gender Equality and Health*](#), 04 December 2017

The Men's Health Forum, [*Men do want to see their GP. They don't want to take time off work*](#). (accessed 16 November 2020)

Education

Office for students, [*White British males from low socioeconomic status backgrounds: Resources*](#), 27 July 2020

Hewitt, R., [*Mind the gap: gender differences in higher education*](#), HEPI, 07 March 2020

Education Policy Institute, et al., [*Boys studying modern foreign languages at GCSE in schools in England*](#), 27 January 2020

Rough sleeping

Boobis, S., et al., [*A Foot In The Door: Experiences of the Homelessness Reduction Act \(2020\)*](#), Crisis, 10 March 2020, p.5, pp. 10-11, p.46, pp.48-52

Tytherleigh, E., [*Homelessness is rising at a startling rate – but solutions are available*](#), Stoll, 21 January 2020

Office for National Statistics, [*Deaths of homeless people in England and Wales: 2018*](#), 1 October 2019

Most of the deaths in 2018 were among men (641 estimated deaths; 88% of the total).

Hestia, [*Underground Lives: Male Victims of Modern Slavery*](#), October 2018

Homeless Link, [*Impact of multiple moves on men with complex needs*](#), 10 September 2018

Men's Minds Matter, [*Men and Homelessness*](#) (accessed 16 November 2020)

Male suicide

Mental Health Foundation, [*Men and mental health*](#), 12 Nov 2020

Samaritans, et al., [*Men and Suicide: Why it's a social issue*](#), 20 September 2020

Office for National Statistics, [*Suicides in England and Wales: 2019 registrations*](#), 01 September 2020

Samaritans, [*Out of sight, out of mind: Why less well-off middle-aged men don't get the support they need*](#), April 2020

Domestic abuse and sexual violence

Respect, [*What is honour-based abuse and how does it affect men? In discussion with Karma Nirvana*](#), 09 September 2020

Brooks, M., [*Male Victims of Domestic Abuse and Partner Abuse: 50 Key Facts*](#), ManKind Initiative, March 2020

University of Cumbria, [*New domestic abuse research seeks older male perspective*](#), 03 March 2020

HM Government, [*Position statement on male victims of crimes considered in the cross-Government strategy on ending Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\)*](#), March 2019

Weare, S., et al., [*A Review of the National Male Survivors Helpline and Online Service Project Report*](#), November 2019

Burrell, S. and Westmarland, N., [*The voices of male victims: understanding men's experiences of the Men's Advice Line – An evaluation for Respect UK*](#), Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse, Department of Sociology, Durham University, October 2019

Huntley AL, Potter L, Williamson E, et al. [*Help-seeking by male victims of domestic violence and abuse \(DVA\): a systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis*](#). BMJ Open 2019;9:e021960. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2018-021960

Shared parenting

Fathers 4 Justice, [*Letter to Prime Minister calls for help on domestic violence and abuse against men & the urgent need for a Minister for Men*](#), 20 June 2020

Families Need Fathers, [*Biggest Ever UK Parental Alienation Study Published*](#), 2020

Kruk, Edward. (2018). [*Arguments Against a Presumption of Shared Physical Custody in Family Law*](#). Journal of Divorce & Remarriage. 59. 1-13. 10.1080/10502556.2018.1454201.

Families Need Fathers, [*Shared Parenting Research*](#) (accessed 16 November 2020)

4.2 Other Organisation

[ManKind Initiative](#)

[Men's Advice Line](#)

[Men's Health Forum](#)

[Men's Minds Matter](#)

[Rape and Sexual Violence Project: Male survivors](#)

[Survivors UK: Male rape and sexual abuse](#)

[Samaritans](#)

[Families Need Fathers](#)

[Fathers 4 Justice](#)

[Parental Alienation UK](#)

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