

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

7th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 4  
May 2022

PE1909: Remove the “gender-based crime”  
domestic abuse narrative and make it gender  
neutral and equal

## Note by the Clerk

<b>Lodged on</b>	11 October 2021
<b>Petitioner</b>	William Wright
<b>Petition summary</b>	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:  1) Make domestic abuse policies, guidance, agendas and practices gender neutral  2) Introduce equal domestic abuse provision and funding for everyone in Scotland - regardless of any protected characteristic  3) Ensure all domestic abuse Joint Protocol guidance, policies and practice for Police Scotland and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service are gender neutral.
<b>Webpage</b>	<a href="https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1909">https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1909</a>

## Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [19 January 2022](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government, Police Scotland, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Respect Men’s Advice Line, ASSIST and SARCO’s Fearfree Service.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee’s last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.

3. The Committee has received new responses from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Police Scotland, ASSIST, the Minister for Equalities and Older People, AMIS and the Petitioner which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
5. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).

## Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

### **Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

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

## Petitioner

William Wright

## Date lodged

11/10/2021

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

1. Make domestic abuse policies, guidance, agendas and practices gender neutral
2. Introduce equal domestic abuse provision and funding for everyone in Scotland - regardless of any protected characteristic
3. Ensure all domestic abuse Joint Protocol guidance, policies and practice for Police Scotland and Crown Office and Prosecutor Fiscal Service are gender neutral.

## Previous action

I have raised these issues directly with:

Justice Minister, Scot Gov, who simply sent me generic information

My MSP, who has done nothing

My Regional MSP, who is now asking the Government for information on how stats are being collected by Police Scotland for males and females on domestic abuse

My public protection councillor, who has done nothing

My MP, who has done nothing

My councillors, who have done nothing

Police Scotland executive, they blocked me from contact for 12 months.

## Background information

The Scottish Government "gender-based crime" narrative for domestic abuse is labelling innocent men; harming them, hurting them, destroying them, and their families too.

From experience the data being captured by police and COPFS on domestic abuse and gender differences is not accurate, does not reflect the reality, and cases are being manipulated by these services to support the Scottish Government's biased and discriminatory narrative that domestic abuse is a "gender-based crime".

It is dangerous to teach future generations of children that domestic abuse is a gender-based crime in Scotland, putting boys and men at risk and disadvantage.

The narrative enables female abusers to make false and malicious allegations about men, and police continue to fail to hold these abusers accountable for their malice.

The gender-based narrative does not empower women; it empowers female abusers. This does not represent equality. Equality is acknowledging that this crime can happen to "anyone".

## Annexe B

### Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1909: Remove the “gender-based crime” domestic abuse narrative and make it gender neutral and equal on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022

**The Convener:** Item 3 is consideration of new petitions. I say to anybody who is tuning in to see their petition being considered for the first time that we seek the views of the Scottish Government on all new petitions before we formally consider them. The responses that we receive in advance form the notes that members get in their papers ahead of consideration of the petitions at the committee.

The first new petition, PE1909, which was lodged by William Wright, calls for the removal of the so-called gender-based domestic abuse narrative and for it to be made gender neutral and equal. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make domestic abuse policies, guidance, agendas and practices gender neutral; to introduce equal domestic abuse provision and funding for everyone in Scotland, regardless of any protected characteristic; and to ensure that all domestic abuse joint protocol guidance, policies and practice for Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service are gender neutral.

In her submission, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government outlines a number of key statistics as evidence that domestic abuse is predominantly perpetrated by men against women. For example, women are nearly three times more likely to be killed by a partner or ex-partner, and 95 per cent of charges that were reported by the police to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in 2020-21 involved a male alleged perpetrator. However, it is acknowledged that the statistics do not mean that “men and boys cannot be the victims of domestic abuse”.

The cabinet secretary’s submission points out that the provisions in criminal law that are used to prosecute domestic abuse are gender neutral and apply equally to all perpetrators. The submission also highlights several funded services for male victims and notes that the 2021-22 programme for government included a commitment to establishing a national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys.

The petitioner suggests that the Scottish Government’s equally safe work, which describes women and girls as being higher risk, as well as the Police Scotland and COPFS guidance on domestic abuse, risk creating a bias against violence against men and boys.

Do members have any comments or suggestions?

**Ruth Maguire:** As the statistics in the cabinet secretary's submission highlight, the causes and consequences of violence are different for men and women, as are the approaches that we need to take to prevent and—as I hope, one day, we will do—eradicate that violence.

I suggest that we press the Scottish Government by writing to it to seek further details on the national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys, including a timescale for its publication. I think that it would also be helpful to write to Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to seek their views on the petition. In addition, it would be helpful to hear from the services that are targeted at men and boys that are mentioned in our papers, such as the Respect men's advice line, ASSIST and Sacro's FearFree service.

**The Convener:** No other member has indicated that they wish to comment—unless Mr Sweeney is indicating that he would like to come in.

**Paul Sweeney:** I am all right, thank you, convener.

**The Convener:** It was just a loose hand—rather than a family pet or anything—that caught my attention.

We thank Mr Wright for his petition, which we intend to keep open. We will write to the various Government bodies and organisations that Ruth Maguire identified. Does the committee agree to our following that process?

*[Members indicated agreement].*

## Annexe C

### Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service submission of 9 February 2022

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

Thank you for your letter dated 21st January 2022 seeking the views of COPFS on the proposed action within Petition PE1909.

The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and Police Scotland Joint Protocol on Domestic Abuse defines domestic abuse as: “any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct, and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere including online”.

As set out in the protocol, this definition includes abuse of male victims by female perpetrators and includes abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people within relationships.

I enclose a link to the protocol for your information: [Joint Protocol on Domestic Abuse](#).

The protocol acknowledges that domestic abuse as a form of gender-based violence is predominately perpetrated by men against women.

COPFS publishes official statistics on Domestic Abuse and Stalking Charges in Scotland. The official statistics for 2020-21 were published on 7 September 2021 and are available at the following link: [Statistics \(copfs.gov.uk\)](#)

In 2020-21, 28,975 (87%) of the charges reported to COPFS with a domestic abuse identifier were in cases where the accused was male.

I hope that the information set out in this letter is helpful to the Committee.

## Police Scotland submission of 18 February 2022

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

I write in response to your recent correspondence, which was received via email on the 21 January 2022, I can offer the following response.

In respect of points one, two and three:

1. **“Make domestic abuse policies, guidance, agendas and practices gender neutral”.**
2. **“Introduce equal domestic abuse provision and funding for everyone in Scotland - regardless of any protected characteristic”.**
3. **“Ensure all domestic abuse Joint Protocol guidance, policies and practice for Police Scotland and Crown Office and Prosecutor Fiscal Service are gender neutral”.**

I would offer comment that all of the work of Police Scotland is underpinned by our commitment to clear equality and diversity values. This is evident in our continued engagement and interactions with our partners and the public.

Effectively tackling domestic abuse is an organisational priority for Police Scotland and we are committed to working with all partners to reduce the harm it causes and ultimately eradicate it.

Domestic abuse is a despicable and debilitating crime which affects all of our communities and has no respect for ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.



The Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) defines domestic abuse as:

*“Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship. The relationship will be between partners (married, co-habiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse can be committed in the home or elsewhere including online.”*

The definition of domestic abuse does not distinguish roles according to a person’s sex or gender and encompasses the entire spectrum of behaviour by perpetrators.

It is acknowledged through statistical analysis of domestic incidents recorded by Police Scotland that domestic abuse, as a form of gender based violence, is predominately perpetrated by men against women. In 2020-2021, 80% of all record domestic incidents featured a male perpetrator and a female victim.

This definition also acknowledges and includes abuse of male victims by female perpetrators and includes abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people within relationships.

While it is acknowledged that domestic abuse is a form of gender based violence, there is no variance in the level of service a victim will receive regardless of their sex or gender.

The gender identification of individuals who come into contact with the police will be based on how they present unless an alternative gender is disclosed. This is the case for all offences. In the context of operational duties, officers do not routinely ask the sex or gender of people they interact with.

# ASSIST submission of 18 February 2022

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

Thank you for your email in which the Committee seeks ASSIST's views on the action called for in the above noted petition, which asks that the Parliament urge the Scottish Government to:

1. Make domestic abuse policies, guidance, agendas and practices gender neutral.
2. Introduce equal domestic abuse provision and funding for everyone in Scotland - regardless of any protected characteristic.
3. Ensure all domestic abuse Joint Protocol guidance, policies and practice for Police Scotland and Crown Office and Prosecutor Fiscal Service are gender neutral

ASSIST as a Specialist Independent Domestic Abuse Advocacy and Support Service is funded by the Scottish Government to support women, children and men who have been victims of domestic abuse. We work across 12 local authority areas covering 42% of Scotland's population. ASSIST aims are to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse are safe, informed and supported throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system. ASSIST supports victims of domestic abuse through a risk led response focusing on reducing the risk to and improve the safety of victims of domestic abuse, our service is designed to ensure that all survivors of domestic violence receive the same level of service.

### **1) Make domestic abuse policies, guidance, agendas and practices gender neutral**

The committee has been provided with the most recent statistics and policy context from colleagues in the Scottish Government and I won't repeat them. However, whilst not attempting to minimise acts of violence within same sex relationships or perpetrated by women towards men, it is important to emphasise that domestic abuse is associated with

broader gender inequality, and should be understood in its historical context, whereby societies have given greater status, wealth, influence, control, and power to men. Domestic Abuse is part of a range of behaviours constituting male abuse of power and is linked to other forms of male violence including child sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault. Although both men and women may experience incidents of violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. They are also more likely to have experienced sustained physical, psychological, or emotional abuse, or violence which results in injury or death.

There has been a wealth of evidence generated over the past 40 years on this issue, that continues to support the gendered analysis of domestic abuse and provides clear direction for action to prevent abuse, protect those at risk of, or exposed to abuse and provide appropriate supports for all survivors. A gendered analysis recognises differences in men's and women's experiences of violence and abuse. This is useful because it indicates actions which can guide development of services to respond to the consequences of abuse and importantly, actions which ultimately reduce the likelihood of domestic abuse occurring.

Understanding gender as the central factor in domestic abuse enables us to develop services which are sensitive to the differing needs of individuals affected by domestic abuse. It highlights that as men and women have differing needs, they may require different services and service approaches. Approaches which do not recognise the influence of gender in everyday experiences fail both men and women.

Assumptions that experiences of men and women are equivalent will not achieve equality of outcome. Failure to acknowledge the influence of gender in perpetration of abuse, as well as the experience of abuse, presents a barrier to eliminating or reducing domestic abuse in our society.

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

As noted in the opening paragraph ASSIST is funded to provide advocacy support to women, men and children who have been victims of domestic abuse. We support victims of domestic abuse where a person has been charged or is likely to be charged with a domestic abuse

related crime. Eligibility is not affected by gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, immigration status or any disabilities. We receive referrals for male victims of Domestic Abuse and provide equal provision for these clients. Over the past 2 years around 6% of our referrals were male victims of Domestic Abuse.

Our service is accredited by the SafeLives Leading Lights programme, an accreditation programme which recognises and rewards good and safe practice in community based domestic abuse services across the UK. The programme offers services and partners a set of standards for supporting victims of domestic abuse, through a risk led response and is designed to ensure that survivors of domestic violence receive the same level of service, regardless of where they are in the country. Leading Lights accreditation requires we meet a high set of standards around service provision including measures to ensure consistency around casework and a “specialist pro-active, risk led response”.

All adult victims will have an improved experience of the process if they are engaged with an advocacy service such as ASSIST. We walk alongside them from the time of reporting until the conclusion of the case and maintain links with the relevant agencies (e.g., police, COPFS, VSS, Victim Information and Advice [VIA], CJSW, Scottish Prison Service [SPS], to ensure they have the best experience possible. We can also make sure that other agencies (housing, health, social work) are aware of the criminal justice process so resources and assessments can be adjusted to reflect the associated risk.

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

We are unable to comment on this point.

## Minister for Equalities and Older People submission of 21 February 2022

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

Thank you for your letter of 24 January 2022, in which the Committee seeks further details about the Scottish Government's intention for a strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys.

As the statistics stated in the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government's previous letter of 18 November 2021 highlight, the causes and consequences of violence are different for men and women, as are the approaches that we need to take to prevent and eradicate that violence.

Domestic and intimate partner violence, in all its forms, has no place in Scotland. The Scottish Government are absolutely clear that there is no excuse for intimate partner abuse, regardless of the gender of the victim, or of the perpetrator.

I would like to reiterate that the Scottish Government and COSLA's joint strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls, [Equally Safe](#), is underpinned by a gendered analysis which recognises that women and girls are disproportionately affected by certain forms of violence and abuse precisely because they are women and girls. These forms of gender-based violence, which include domestic abuse, rape and sexual violence, are a function of gender inequality and an abuse of male power and privilege. In order to effectively tackle gender based violence, we need to challenge the outdated gender stereotypes and societal attitudes towards women and girls that enable it to continue.

Equally Safe acknowledges that men and boys can be victims of intimate partner violence. Furthermore, many of the actions within the delivery plan are intended to help everyone; such as an increased focus on education about concepts like consent and healthy relationships.

There is also a focus on tackling negative gender roles and stereotypes that we know are harmful to men and women alike.

In our most recent Programme for Government 2021-22 we committed to progress work to tackle violence against men and boys, investing in services which support male survivors of rape and domestic abuse.

I refer to the letter from the Cabinet Secretary which details current funding from the Delivering Equally Safe Fund for services targeted at supporting male victims of domestic abuse. I would also highlight the government's Victim Centred Approach Fund based within the Justice portfolio, which is worth around £14.5m per year from 2022/23 – 2024/25. The [Victim-Centred Approach Fund](#) is a new Scottish Government funding programme which will enable organisations to provide practical and emotional support to all victims, survivors and witnesses of crime across Scotland. Applications to this fund are in the process of being assessed.

A national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys will reflect a broad range of cross-cutting issues. It involves collaboration across government portfolios: for Health, forensic medical services in terms of men/boys' experience of sexual assault and violence, and public health in terms of healthy relationships; for Justice, in relation to how crime is experienced by men and boys; for Education, in relation to prevention, consent and relationships, and encompass LGBTI equality in relation to domestic or sexual abuse in men's same sex relationships.

The work of the Chief Medical Officer Taskforce and the Public Health Scotland annual report, will lead to national data on the number of male victims who have had a forensic medical examination following rape and sexual assault. This will provide data on the number of forensic medical examinations carried out nationally and can be broken down by sex. This will provide partial baseline data on the scale and need for specific resources. We will consider the issues that affect men and boys specifically and gather insight on how to overcome current barriers to male survivors seeking support, specialist services, or reporting criminal behaviour.

The development of the strategy will progress over this year in line with Programme for Government. The intention is to engage and consult on

the strategy by September 2022. We will be sure to move forward collaboratively, and draw on key stakeholders to inform the initial stages of the strategy.

## AMIS submission of 5 April 2022

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**“Gender based violence is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege.... *Gender-based violence against women shall mean violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.*”**

[This definition underpins all Government pronouncements on partner abuse.](#)

The CoE concedes that men are also victims:

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

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

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

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



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

*“It seems possible that in this case a professional ‘mind-set’ may have been fixed in a particular place, i.e. that women are victims of abuse and men aren’t, and that the wider picture and wider definition of abuse may have been missed.”*

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

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

Encouragingly, it advises:

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

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

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

- Dempsey, B., 2013. *Men’s Experience of Domestic Abuse in Scotland*. AMIS. <https://abusedmeninscotland.org/who-we-are/resources/>
- Dempsey, B., 2013. *Men’s Experience of Domestic Abuse in Scotland*. AMIS. <https://abusedmeninscotland.org/who-we-are/resources/>
- Hine, Benjamin, Bates, Elizabeth A., Mackay, Jennifer, Graham-Kevan, Nicola. (2021) *Comparing the Demographic Characteristics, and Reported Abuse Type, Contexts and Outcomes of Help-Seeking Heterosexual Male and Female Victims of Domestic Violence: Part I –*

*Who Presents to Specialist Services? Partner Abuse* Vol 13 Issue 1, DOI: 10.1891/PA-2021-0009

<https://connect.springerpub.com/content/sgrpa/13/1/20>

- Professor Nicola Graham-Kevan, Deborah Powney and Mankind (2022), *Male Victims of Coercive Control: Experiences and Impact*. UKRI Research England, Mankind Initiative, University of Central Lancashire, Criminal Justice Partnership.

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

- Hine, Wallace & Bates 2021 *Understanding the Profile and Needs of Abused Men: Exploring Call Data From a Male Domestic Violence Charity in the United Kingdom*

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/08862605211028014>

- Hine, Bates & Wallace 2020. "I Have Guys Call Me and Say 'I Can't Be the Victim of Domestic Abuse'": Exploring the Experiences of Telephone Support Providers for Male Victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0886260520944551>

- Dr Elizabeth A. Bates 2019. *Men's experience of domestic abuse in Scotland: An Update* University of Cumbria.

<https://abusedmeninscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/bates-lit-review-for-website.pdf>

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

AMIS believes public funding should reflect the level of needs.

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

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

Police Scotland's recent whole-force coercive-control training focused on female victims of men. The trainer referred to men as perpetrators

posing as victims more than as actual victims (noted by an AMIS trustee invited to observe). 70% of people using AMIS's services do not report to the police. Revised gender-informed training for all in the justice system would make it easier for any victim to come forward.

Gender stereotypes or assumptions arising from the current 'gender-based crime' approach may have influenced Mr Wright's treatment. If lessons are learnt from the upheld complaints, future frustration, stress, trauma and cost to victims and their children - and costs to the public purse - might be avoided.

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

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

## Petitioner submission of 12 April 2022 PE1909/H – Remove the “gender-based crime” domestic abuse narrative and make it gender neutral and equal

### Expected Outcome: Males Charged

Michael Matheson MSP stated to me during a call that the Scottish Government have the “*expected outcome*” that more men will be charged for domestic abuse in Scotland.

I feel this is a predetermined and unethical outcome. (*I called as a constituent*)

### VAWG/GBV narrative: detriment on male victims

*“Milligan (2019) identified similar issues in her U.S. sample of male victims and Walker et al. (2019) in their Australian sample. The dominant narrative of men as perpetrators and women as victims appears to have created myopia whereby individuals who do not fit the standard narrative are discredited (Gold, 2019; Hogan, 2020; Walker et al., 2019).”*

VAWG: detriment on male victims

Research by Mankind Initiative (2021) concluded, *“Given the invisibility of male victims within the ‘system’ and society at large, and the lack of responses/support for them, it is clear that this is compounded by defining their victimhood and experiences as being a victim of “Violence Against Women and Girls“ (VAWG)”* (1)

GBV Narrative: Trafficking

Public Health Scotland claims ‘trafficking’ is a gender-based violence crime, e.g. affects women more than men (7)

However, Home Office stats, Jan to March 2021 show more men (71%) and boys (78%) are trafficked in the UK (8)

Exaggeration/Miscommunication: Female Domestic Homicides

UNODC Global Study on Homicide, 2019, stats are used to exaggerate the problem in Scotland.

Of 50,000 female homicides, 3,000 were in Europe (6% of all female homicides) (2)

In Scotland, Scottish Government data shows 10 female homicides 2020-21 (3)

Communication Offences

COPFS data shows higher conviction rates for females for Section 127, ‘persistent unwanted contact’ crime, replacing female perpetrated stalking behaviour and domestic abuse offences. (COPFS FOI)  
My female perpetrator’s conduct was regarded by police as domestic abuse and stalking (evidenced in writing), yet she was arrested for Section 127.

False allegations Convictions

In 2019-20, Scottish Government FOI data shows that 100% of all convictions for false allegations were female. (Scot Gov FOI)  
I reported my female abuser for false allegations and the police did not investigate it (PIRC CHR 2021 supports this)

Female perpetrated abuse**Online Abuse/Misogyny**

*“Looking at this data set of thousands of pieces of misogynistic abuse, and looking at the people the perpetrators of this abuse...The algorithm suggested 50% were women” (4)*

**Gaslighting**

*“For example...here we see almost 3 out of 5 men had been threatened with disclosure of damaging/embarrassing information by their partner, evidencing that men and women are similar in their exposure to ‘gaslighting’” (5)*

**Economic Abuse**

*“Although traditionally framed as a female issue, the participants reported experiencing economic abuse. Half of male victims had their earnings controlled as a pattern of abuse which in some cases led to men not being able to purchase food or clothing.” (6)*

Female Victims are Perpetrators

Research in 2018 concluded,  
*“The researchers concluded that a significant proportion of females seeking help for victimisation are also perpetrators of intimate partner violence” (10)*

Female perpetrated domestic abuse programmes

There are 0 programmes for female perpetrators in Scotland. Yet Scottish Government have the Caledonian Programme for male perpetrators only (11)

Male Experiences Research (2019)

Lancaster University Law School found:

*“Participants most frequently reported that **the perpetrator was their female partner or ex-partner**, and that their forced-to-penetrate experiences were one element of domestic abuse and/or postseparation abuse that they experienced” (9)*

*“Specialist male sexual and domestic violence services are important and had a positive impact on those participants who accessed them.*

***However, not all participants were aware of their existence, or were able to access them.*** (9)

Like I experienced with ASSIST, CEA Falkirk, Victim Support Scotland.

***“There were numerous barriers to men disclosing and engaging with organisations and services. These included: fear of not being believed; feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame; lack of knowledge about, and availability of, specialist male sexual and domestic violence support services; and gender expectations around masculinity.”*** (9)

***“The majority of participants did not report to the police. Of those that did report the vast majority had negative experiences with the police.”*** (9)

***“Participants had overwhelmingly negative perceptions of the police, criminal justice system, and the law. Concerns were raised around: bias against men; disbelief they can be victims of female perpetrated sexual and domestic violence; and inequality of treatment as victims under sexual offences law”*** (9)

I believe there are a number of problems with ASSIST:

- ASSIST is police referral only.
- ASSIST refused to help me as I outside of the West of Scotland. No support.
- ASSIST cannot claim to be a good representation of male domestic abuse in Scotland, as they only cover some of Scotland.
- ASSIST does not have an open referral system, and only receives them via Police Scotland, who have biased training, guidance, policies and practices towards men.
- ASSIST has given a very ideological view of domestic abuse, which differs substantially from the reality in Scotland

Can I ask that the Committee please contact the following organisations for additional evidence:

- Abused Men in Scotland
- Mankind Initiative
- Paul Levelle Foundation
- Men's Aid Ireland