

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

19th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday  
21 December 2022

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

**Lodged on** 11 October 2021

**Petitioner** William Wright

**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.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1909>

## Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [4 May 2022](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government, Police Scotland, Mankind Initiative, Paul Lavelle Foundation and Men’s Aid Ireland.
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 Minister for Equalities and Older People, the Mankind Initiative, the Petitioner and Police Scotland, 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 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**The Convener:** PE1909 calls for the removal of the gender-based domestic abuse narrative and for it to be made gender neutral and equal. The petition, which was lodged by William Wright, 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.

At our previous consideration of the petition, we agreed to write to stakeholders to seek their views. We have now received submissions from the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Police Scotland, ASSIST, the Minister for Equalities and Older People, the petitioner, and Abused Men in Scotland—AMIS—which is a male domestic abuse charity that operates a helpline service across Scotland. The submissions have been shared in full in advance of the meeting.

Some key points are raised in the submissions. COPFS says that the current definition of domestic abuse “includes abuse of male victims by female perpetrators”.

Police Scotland states that there is no sex or gender variance in the level of service that a victim will receive. The Minister for Equalities and Older People states that, in September this year, the Scottish Government will engage and consult on a “national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men”. ASSIST states that a gendered approach is important in recognising that men and women “may require different services and service approaches.”

AMIS recommends that, instead of domestic abuse approaches being gender neutral, they should be gender inclusive, and that measures should be proportionate instead of equal. It raises a concern that the sharing of the overall funding for services that support men and women gives the misleading impression that male services are adequately funded. It also advocates “Revised gender-informed training for all in the justice system”.

The petitioner’s most recent submission provides further information about his experiences as a male victim of domestic abuse. He also suggests several other stakeholders that the committee may wish to hear from.

There is quite a lot for us to consider. Do colleagues have any suggestions?

**David Torrance:** The clerks suggest that we write to the Scottish Government to ask how the petitioner can engage with the development of the national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys. We should also write to Police Scotland to ask about its approach to gender-informed domestic abuse training, and to the stakeholders that are outlined in the petitioner's recent submission.

**The Convener:** We should also write to the petitioner, in particular, given that the national strategy will be established with a view to considerations being taken from September this year. It would be very useful for the petitioner to contribute to that. Are we content?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Annexe C

### Minister for Equalities and Older People submission of 10 June 2022

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

Thank you for your letter of 13 May, in which the Committee asks how the petitioner can directly engage with the development of the national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys.

As mentioned in the previous letter on 21 February, the development of this strategy is ongoing, with the intention to engage and consult on the strategy from September 2022. When developing any strategy, it is a priority for the Scottish Government to involve key stakeholders in the process through active engagement. This ensures that the Scottish Government is drawing on and collaborating with the opinions of trusted voices which help inform and shape successful strategies. As such, officials will be in contact with stakeholders to invite them to give their views and help inform the development in due course.

I would like to thank the petitioner for their interest in the work and reiterate that while it is absolutely clear that women are, by far, most impacted by domestic abuse and sexual violence, we take the issue of intimate partner violence seriously regardless of the gender of the victim, or of the perpetrator. This is why we recognise the importance of developing this strategy, which will be complementary to the Equally Safe Strategy which addresses violence against women and girls.

### The Mankind Initiative submission of 19 June 2022

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

Thank you for inviting us to submit our views.

I can confirm that the charity does not support the notion that domestic abuse is a gender-based crime because this is an ideologically based position that leads to:

- The unequal and lack of equitable application of law and professional practice to male and LGBT+ victims of domestic abuse
- Provides additional barriers to male and LGBT+ victims who continue to be marginalised and second-class victims of these crimes
- Continues to ensure a lack of public services and also recognition in wider society of the existence of male and LGBT+ victims.

Our view (in keeping with creating a modern, inclusive and equitable world), is that a fully gender-inclusive approach should be taken with respect to domestic abuse – that supports and recognises each individual victim separately; is based on their individual risks and needs; recognises, where appropriate, barriers and support needs based on their gender.

It is vital that their Protected Characteristics are taken into account, such as sex/gender, when providing support but this can never override the need to view each individual victim distinctly.

Such an approach would ensure no one individual's needs should be seen as being a higher priority, worthy of higher attention or discussion than anyone else's – especially where the level of risk and need is the same.

The problem with a gender-based crime narrative is that in effect, it creates a hierarchal approach to victims of domestic abuse based on their sex/gender which is not how the law in Scotland (or anywhere in the UK) works.

This is the problem with classing domestic abuse as a gender-based crime as ultimately it means that while the law and professional practice has to be applied to all equally, it is not in our experience, always applied equally. Heterosexual female victims are seen as the priority when all types of victims should have equal priority.

This is enhanced by the fact that in Scotland male victims of domestic abuse are classed as being victims of crimes classed as Violence Against Women and Girls...when clearly they are not women and girls. This still marginalises those men further.



The last general point is that there is inconsistency at the heart of policy making as neither rough sleeping or suicide are classed as being “gendered” housing or mental health problems – even though the large majority of victims are male. However, a different approach is taken when it comes to domestic abuse. There has never been an explanation for the reason for this different approach and policy inconsistency.

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

The key issue is they are meant to be “gender-neutral” in that they should describe and apply to all victims (female and male) equally but there can be a problem in their application and also in any language that minimises male victims if this is set within a “gender-based” narrative. Being gender neutral can however, lead to no-one being adequately supported, so whilst we accept the need for everything to apply equally, some guidance and practices should take into account the different needs and barriers that women and men – where relevant and where it does not undermine the principle of equal application. It is important that a gender-informed and gender-responsive approach is taken and overlays the overarching gender-neutral application of policy and practice.

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

Every victim of domestic abuse must be able to access the support they need and be treated equally to any other victim with the same risk and need. This is a fundamental human right and is aligned to equalities legislation.

The simple test is:

If a woman who is a victim of domestic abuse in Aberdeen, Ayr or Arbroath has full access to domestic abuse support and advocacy from an organisation in her community which is funded by the “state” (which we hope she does, of course) **but** a man from Aberdeen, Ayr or Arbroath who is also a victim with the same level of risk and need has no (or less equivalent) access funded by the “state”, then he is being discriminated against because of his sex/gender.

That is the test that the Scottish Government, public bodies and local authorities have to pass.

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

This is self-evident – however, the issue is are they applied equally, is the language balanced and neutral so does not favour (or lead to favouring) one sex/gender over another to create a hierarchy (often caused by minimising male victims)

A hierarchy creates two tiers of victims with male and LGBT+ victims at the bottom and they are not being recognised and supported as heterosexual female victims rightly are. These bodies listed above – have to acknowledge that upfront as being fundamental to their operation and practice.

There is no place for ideology in the delivery or recognition of support to victims of domestic abuse, as there should not be for any victims of any crime. Classing domestic abuse as being fundamentally a gender-based crime is an ideological view and one we do not share for the reasons above.

## Petitioner submission of 6 August 2022

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

### Equally Safe (VAWG) vs Stats

Equally Safe (VAWG) claims that domestic abuse is a result of male privilege and patriarchy.

Scottish stats shows this is not the case.

### **Suicide Stats, 2021 (released 2nd August 2022)**

- 795 suicides
- 75.03% were male ([1](#))

### **Drug Deaths, 2021 (released 28th July 2022)**

- 1330 drug deaths
- 70.2% were male ([2](#))

### **Homicides 2020-21 (26th October 2021)**

- 58 victims
- 83% were male ([3](#))

Stats directly contradict that men in Scotland have privilege and patriarchy is enabling them to oppress others.

### My Experience 2022

5th April 2022

#### **Police Scotland: Failure to Record and Investigate my Domestic Abuse Report**

- I received new evidence showing domestic abuse towards me by my abuser (who I previously reported to Police Scotland)
- 5th April 2022, police attended my home and I reported domestic abuse and provided evidence.
- Police failed to record my report properly or investigate it.
- In a record of the meeting, police falsely claimed I was seeking advice.
- I have submitted a complaint about this.

7th April 2022

#### **Police Scotland: Evidence of Unconscious Bias**

- A police record on their IVPD system referred to me as a perpetrator of domestic abuse in relation to an incident I was **not** involved in.
- I made a complaint.
- After investigation, Police Scotland stated the following, "*...I must conclude that the VPD does display 'unconscious bias' in both the original and its current form. This is because it does not reflect your previous interactions with police regarding domestic abuse*".
- This is evidence of unconscious bias towards me as a male victim of domestic abuse.
- I have submitted a further complaint about this.

12th April to 30th July 2022

#### **Police Scotland: My Arrest and Profiling**

- 12th April 2022, 5 days after my domestic abuse report, police attend my home as an enquiry.
- 30th April 2022, police attend my home and state I am to be arrested.

- 18th May 2022, I was arrested for a Communication Offence. It is still unclear what this was about, with no evidence shown to me. My female abuser's name was mentioned.
- Police conducted investigations until 30th July 2022 where police confirmed the matter was closed.
- I have submitted complaints for profiling, harassment and abuse by the Police.

22nd July 2022

### **Police Scotland: Evidence of Profiling**

- Police Scotland IVPD recording system records me as a perpetrator multiple times.
- I contested this via the police data team.
- 22nd July 2022, Police Scotland data team confirm 5 records incorrectly referred to me as a perpetrator.
- 4 records that had "*classification of 'perpetrator' removed*"
- 1 record "*after re-assessment, record deleted as considered to have been recorded in error*".
- Clear example of profiling and bias in police records

If the committee refers to my submission PE1909/B you see similarities and consistency with 'My Experience 2019-2021'.

Police Scotland

### **VAWG, Police Scotland and DCC Malcolm Graham (January 2022)**

- 19th January 2022, the BBC reported that "*...Malcolm Graham, says the current police approach is aligned to Scottish government's Equally Safe Strategy and the National Police Chiefs' Council Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls...Work has commenced on the development of a bespoke Police Scotland Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls, to ensure **women and girls are respected and live free from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and harassment***" (5)

Police Scotland are pushing ahead with a sexist, biased and stigmatising strategy that excludes and ignores male victims of domestic abuse.

SNP

in my view, there is a culture of condoning and enabling sexual harassment and abuse in SNP.

### **Patrick Grady, Sexual Harassment (June 2022)**

- The SNP MP behaved sexually inappropriate to a member of staff (6)
- The SNP were criticised for their response, “...triggering widespread criticism of party leaders for appearing to downplay the severity of Grady’s conduct and failing to take faster action against him” (7)

### **Patricia Gibson, Sexual Harassment (August 2022)**

- The female SNP MP behaved sexually inappropriate to a member of staff (6) “included ...asking him to “come home and shag me” and repeatedly propositioning him.” (8)
- SNP investigation stated, “...In this context it is highly unlikely that [he] would have felt any kind of physical threat or vulnerability as a man. It is discriminatory to suggest that the impact of sexual harassment of a man by a woman is ‘the same’ as sexual harassment of a woman by a man.” (9)

### **SNP, Hannah Bardell Head of Comms Social Media (April 2022)**

- Head of Comms for SNP MP made a public comment on social media in relation to UK Governments VAWG strategy acknowledging male victims
- She stated, “Men not only gaslighting their victims, but the Government too. Nice :) :) :)”
- I raised a direct complaint to Hannah Bardell’s office. The tweet was removed. There was no apology given.

*I can provide the committee with social media and police report evidence.*

## **Police Scotland submission of 14 December 2022**

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

In respect of points one and two

1. What Police Scotland's current approach to gender-informed domestic abuse training is and how support for male victims is highlighted as part of this; and
2. What resources are used to help Police Officers identify, understand and support male victims of abuse specifically

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.

Police Scotland are working with partner agencies to improve reporting via various methods.

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 2021-2022, 81% of all record domestic incidents featured a male perpetrator and a female victim. It is acknowledged that domestic abuse is still underreported across all of society.

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.

*“The Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) acknowledges that as a form of gender based violence, domestic abuse is perpetrated by men against women, however officers are reminded that the definition of domestic abuse encompasses an entire spectrum of abuse which includes the abuse of male victims by female perpetrators.*

There is no variance in the current training provided to officers on how to support victims of domestic abuse based on the victims’ specific gender. When responding to incidents of domestic abuse officers will ensure that all possible lines of enquiry are rigorously pursued, making every effort to establish the nature of the relationship including history and relevant background information in order to identify the victim, and thereafter direct them to the most relevant support agency to meet their needs.

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.

Police Scotland work closely with our key partners, including AMIS (Abused Men in Scotland) to provide support to male victims of domestic abuse. Abused Men in Scotland is a national organisation providing support to any man affected by domestic abuse. They will work with any man over 16 years of age who is affected by domestic abuse, regardless of sexuality, transgender status or history, age, religion, race, nationality or ethnic origin.



AMIS are a member of and participate in Police Scotland's Domestic Abuse Forum (DAF). The purpose of the Domestic Abuse Forum is to discuss and inform Police Scotland's strategic direction in relation to Domestic Abuse and it is attended by a number of internal and external partners.

Our Domestic Abuse Investigators Course (DAIC) is underpinned by Lived Experience accounts, a number of case studies feature lived experience which shapes the learning. AMIS provide input on this course to understand and support male victims of abuse