

Rt Hon Humza Yousaf MSP
First Minister of Scotland
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

By e-mail

30 March 2023

Dear First Minister,

May we extend warm congratulations on your election as First Minister of Scotland.

In the UK, around one in six men will experience some form of sexual violence¹. These numbers double when considering men experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace, and for gay and bisexual men, data suggests the number hovers at around 47%². As many as 84% of men who have had experiences that would meet the legal definition of sexual abuse do not describe themselves as victims or survivors³. Concerning male survivors of child sexual abuse, research shows that more than 1 in 5 men take over 30 years to disclose what has happened to them⁴.

At present, policies to support male victims of crimes like sexual abuse, domestic violence and so-called honour-based violence are managed through national 'Violence Against Women and Girls' strategies. This does not provide adequate protection for the men and boys affected, does not meet their gender-specific needs, can marginalise and render male victims invisible, and can further perpetuate the myth of male invulnerability to such crimes.

We, therefore, welcomed the SNP Manifesto commitment in 2021 to *establish a national strategy on ending intimate and sexual violence against men and boys* which is aimed to sit in parallel with and complement the work of Equally Safe. This represents an opportunity to lead the United Kingdom and has the support of many organisations already delivering services in this sector.

¹ "Statistics about sexual violence and abuse" *Rape Crisis*. [Rape-crisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/](https://rape-crisis.org.uk/get-informed/statistics-sexual-violence/). Accessed 29 July 2022.

² "The 1 in 6 Statistic" *1in6*. 1in6.uk/unwanted-sexual-experiences/the-1-in-6-statistic/ Accessed 29 March 2023.

³ "Sexual Offences Victim Characteristics, England and Wales – Office for National Statistics" Nick Stripe, Office for National Statistics, Accessed 18 March 2021.

⁴ "Supporting Male Victims" *Male Survivors Partnership*, www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-male-victims/supporting-male-victims-accessible#fn:40, Accessed 29 March 2023.

Such a strategy would take practical, measurable steps to:

1. Prevent such violence from happening, by challenging attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.
2. Provide adequate support to victims and survivors where violence does occur.
3. Work in partnership to obtain the best outcome for male victims/survivors and their families.
4. Take action to reduce risk to men and boys who are victims of such crimes and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.
5. Represent and reflect the reality of modern Scotland in supporting, including and recognizing equality and diversity in the context of intimate violence.
6. Retain, complement, and enhance Violence Against Women and Girls policies by returning the focus to its original intended purpose.

It is also important to note for the avoidance of doubt that we remain committed to working in solidarity with our colleagues in the women's sector and recognise the disproportionately high rates of sexual violence that women face in Scotland and around the world. It is because of this solidarity that we feel it is vital to form a complementary strategy so that VAWG organisations can focus their resources on supporting women and girls.

We therefore urge you in your new role to recommit to establishing the strategy and would like to formally request a meeting to discuss how your Government plans to deliver this key manifesto commitment.

With very best wishes,

Cllr. Finlay McFarlane
Survivor & Campaigner

Sandy Brindley
CEO: Rape Crisis Scotland

Gary Williams
CEO: Survivors UK

Ally Fogg
Chair: Men and Boys
Coalition

Matthew Withey
Chair: Abused Men in
Scotland

Dr Steven Maxwell
Researcher in Health
Sector Leadership

Tanaka Mhishi
Author, Campaigner &
Associate Fellow at the
Sexual Harms and Medical
Experiences Project,
University of London

