

Man Made: Men, masculinities and equality in public policy

Public policy needs to respond urgently to the problems that men and boys create and the problems that they experience, according to a new report by the Coalition on Men and Boys. This must take place alongside efforts to improve the position and status of women.

The study, *Man Made: Men, masculinities and equality in public policy*, which was funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Government Equalities Office, is being launched at a meeting for MPs and Peers in the House of Lords today (Monday, November 2nd).

Nick Clegg, leader of the Liberal Democrats, is joining Peter Baker, Chair, Coalition on Men and Boys, Sandy Ruxton, lead author of the report, Mary-Ann Stephenson of the Women's National Commission and Dr Neil Wooding, a Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission as speakers at the event.

The report looks in detail at the issues of violence, fatherhood, education, work, and health. It shows that public policy fails to engage with masculinity issues even though recent equality legislation (the gender equality duty) requires the different needs of both sexes to be taken into account. The Coalition on Men and Boys believes that a better understanding of men and masculinity would lead to improved policymaking and service delivery as well as improved outcomes for men, women and children.

To prevent re-offending, every local authority should have a service for men who perpetrate domestic violence, argues the report. The problems men face due to long working hours and difficult-to-access primary health services must be tackled. Fathers need more support to enable them to be fully involved as parents. Schools should do more to educate boys about the need for respect within relationships and towards women and girls.

Men themselves must take more responsibility for promoting gender equality and they have great potential to contribute positively to caring, health, education and anti-violence strategies.

Peter Baker, Chair, Coalition on Men and Boys and Chief Executive, Men's Health Forum, said:

"The Coalition on Men and Boys believes the time is now right for public policy to address men, boys and masculinity in a more sophisticated way. We can't respond effectively to the many problems men and boys cause and the problems they face unless and until there is a genuine cross-government strategic commitment to focus on masculinity in the development of public policy.

"We need to tackle the long-hours working culture, improve men's use of primary healthcare, encourage services to engage more actively with fathers, and develop programmes to educate men and boys about healthy relationships to combat violence against women. Men and boys have great potential to contribute positively to strategies in these areas, and many are actively doing so. We must reach a tipping point, where the majority come to recognise the benefits - for themselves, women and children - of greater equality."

Sandy Ruxton, lead author of the report, said:

"It is often argued that economic and social change has hit men and boys so hard that they are 'in crisis', but in reality the effects are highly uneven. Whilst some men continue to dominate the top jobs in business, politics, the media, the public sector and the justice system, others at the sharp end of recession - particularly those in disadvantaged groups - are facing increasing unemployment and ill-health.

"Alongside efforts to improve the position, status and pay of women at work, public policy needs to respond urgently to the inequalities between men. This should include action to limit excessive executive pay and bonuses, tackle the long hours culture, and encourage male take up of flexible working arrangements and job opportunities in non-traditional sectors."

Neil Wooding, Commissioner, Equality and Human Rights Commission said:

"We need to have policies that are alive to the fact that men and boys have different expectations, and different needs, from women and girls. Stereotypes around caring for children, as an example, mean that working dads can't get more involved as flexible working is given to more women than men.

"The gender equality duty should help transform public services. It puts an obligation on public authorities – from councils to NHS trusts –to collect evidence about the different experiences of the men who use their services, and take any inequalities seriously."

Clare Tickell, Chief Executive, Action for Children said:

"Action for Children welcomes this research examining the role of men in our society. Through our work, we know fathers and male carers need appropriate, accessible support services. Male role models have a profound impact on a child's life,

particularly during the influential early years which help shape and mould a child's later development.

“Action for Children is committed to providing responsive, diverse and unique services to support fathers, male carers, mothers and children so the specific and differing needs of the whole family are met. These services must be inclusive for all and non-stigmatising to be effective and efficient. It is essential that all fathers and male carers have the chance to help their children grow, to form long lasting bonds and give them the best possible start in life.”

The report's main recommendations in relation to key policy areas are:

- **Work:** the European Working Time Directive sets a 48-hour maximum working week, but there is an opt-out for UK employees which should be ended. Employers should also take positive measures to tackle the long hours culture, and there should be disincentives for employers to demand overtime work.
- **Fatherhood:** antenatal, child welfare, education and health services should engage with fathers actively and routinely and support them to fulfil their responsibilities, whilst recognising the continuing importance of safety issues for mothers and children. Public service providers should use the Gender Equality Duty as a positive tool to design services around fathers' and mothers' diverse needs.
- **Health:** action is needed to improve men's use of primary health services. This requires long-term initiatives – such as improved health education in schools – as well as more immediate changes to the opening hours, location, marketing and ambience of services. A national strategy is needed to help achieve this.
- **Education:** concerted and planned programmes should be developed in schools to educate boys about the need for respect within relationships and towards women and girls more generally, and to ensure they understand that violence against women and girls (and each other) is unacceptable. Education on emotional well-being, building healthy relationships and on tackling violence should be embedded across the curriculum.
- **Violence:** in addition to existing provision within the criminal justice system, each local authority should have a service for men who are perpetrators of domestic violence, accredited against the National Service Standard. This should not be at the expense of provision for victims of abuse but part of a wider strategy to promote prevention work, reduce reoffending and improve outcomes for children.

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For further information on:

- The Man Made report, contact lead author Sandy Ruxton, 07983 885212.
- Men's violence, contact Neil Blacklock, Development Director at Respect, 07958 654071 or Chris Green, contact at The White Ribbon Campaign, 07941 597584
- Men's health, contact Peter Baker, Chief Executive at Men's Health Forum, 07786 454905.

- Men as Fathers and Carers contact David Bartlett, Fatherhood Institute, 07958 042476 or the Action for Children Media Team 0207 704 7111
- For general enquiries please contact Peter Baker, Chair of the Coalition on Men and Boys on 07786 454905 or the Action for Children Media Team to field calls.

Notes to editors

'Man Made' provides an in-depth picture of the circumstances and needs of men and boys in England and Wales, and the issues they currently face. It focuses on the themes of work, fatherhood, health, education and violence. It analyses how public policy can support and engage with men and boys effectively, and outlines practical proposals for reform. A downloadable PDF copy of the report and summary can be found at www.comab.org.uk

The Coalition on Men and Boys aims to explore the problems that men and boys face and the problems they create; harness the huge potential that men and boys have to contribute to the well-being of society; and identify how policy and practice - in relation to issues such as work, fatherhood, education, health, and violence - can engage more effectively with men and boys in the UK. The Coalition is unique in that there is currently no other organisation that addresses these issues across the range of public policy. The members of the coalition are: -

- Action for Children
- Fatherhood Institute
- Men's Advice Line
- Men's Health Forum
- Relate
- Respect (the national association for domestic violence perpetrator programmes)
- University of Bradford
- White Ribbon Campaign

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006, which took over the responsibilities of Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and Equal Opportunities Commission. It is the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain. It aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people, and promote and protect human rights. The Commission enforces equality legislation on age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender status, and encourage compliance with the Human Rights Act. It also gives advice and guidance to businesses, the voluntary and public sectors, and to individuals.