

Men's Alliance NI

Dear Sir/Madam

Men's Alliance Northern Ireland (MANi) is a unique service, based on a user led peer support model for Male Victims of Domestic Abuse. Since being established in late 2018 the group operates solely on Facebook, with 280 Support Group members benefiting from 24/7 support and advice from survivors of abuse, counsellors and support professionals. Registration as a charity and expansion of services is underway but has been delayed due to Covid 19.

Men who have been abused face a number of challenges with a lack of services to meet their needs being the greatest issue. MANi will aim to change this but first we need to research and quantify what these men need, discover how we can provide this then aim to help them in times of crisis, promote their recovery and challenge the social injustices that they face.

Many men we have spoken with have long endured the injustice of parental alienation by the design of their ex-partner who is often also their abuser. The abuse they suffered is perpetuated by the making of false allegations, not abiding by court Orders, openly demeaning and degrading them verbally to the children and using the lack of expediency and consequence in the system to their advantage. This pushes some men to their limits and very often they give up when this current system, supposedly unbiased and fair, frustrates their attempts to have contact with their children and grinds them down physically and emotionally. The inevitable loss of hope has led to suicides. We will aim for an assumption of continuation of contact with children with minimal delay. We take the view that every child deserves to have a relationship with a parent who wants to be in their life. Hopefully, this legislation will allow barristers to argue that deliberately keeping a child from another parent is continuing the abuse by other means. In many cases that we know of, children's rights to see their Father do not seem to be being upheld.

There is no doubt that social services, police and the judiciary need to do more. We hope that this new legislation will provide the framework to allow them to explicitly challenge behaviours which lead to Fathers and their children suffering unnecessarily. MANi see this new legislation as an opportunity to address some of the issues that men face after they have left an abusive relationship. The proposals within it give us hope that these men could have a system that will support and listen to them. A system in which they are believed and treated as a victim. A system that will treat them fairly. We want to stand up to all abuse, but we can only do that if legislation and policies are applied equally and support is given equitably to men and women when they need it.

Thank you for your time.

Regards

Carey Baxter
Men's Alliance Northern Ireland (MANi)