



**Putting the Man in your Manifestos:
12 manifesto challenges
for the 2015 General Election**

www.ukmensday.org.uk

**Published for International Men's Day: 19 November 2013 by Glen Poole
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Introduction

This report has been produced by Glen Poole of International Men's Day UK to help politicians consider how they can develop policies for their 2015 manifestos that can help to tackle the many inequalities that men and boys in the UK face.

The report doesn't represent the view of everyone involved in supporting International Men's Day, but it does reflect many of the shared concerns of people working in the men and boys' sector in the UK.

We hope the report will inspire new thinking and encourage politicians of different shades to consider how best their party can take action to respond to the 12 manifesto challenges outlined below:

1. How will you improve men and boys' health?
2. How will you help boys do better at school?
3. How will you help more fathers be involved dads?
4. How will you reduce male suicide?
5. How will you tackle crime involving men and boys?
6. How will you reduce violence involving men and boys?
7. How will you support male workers and male carers?
8. How will you end male homelessness?
9. How will you protect vulnerable men and boys?
10. How will you help men in all their diversity?
11. How will you end unnecessary male circumcision?
12. How will you help men and boys to strengthen their communities?

The following sections set out each of these challenges in more detail.

(1) Challenge One: How will you improve men and boys' health?

Men in the UK die four years sooner than women on average. This unequal life expectancy gap varies enormously from region to region and there are many towns, cities and boroughs in the UK where women living in the wealthiest wards can expect to live more than 10 years longer than men in the most deprived wards.

Why are our systems of healthcare and public health less effective at helping men live long and healthy lives? One explanation is that we put less time, money and energy into men's health.

In 1999 the Men's Health Forum revealed that as a country we were spending eight times more money on women's health than men's health. More recent research has found that there are four times more services specifically targeted at helping women than helping men.

Our approach to cancer prevention, for example, reveals that we put more time money and energy into:

- Protecting women from the cancer causing HPV virus by vaccinating all teenage girls (but not vaccinating boys)
- Trying to detect female cancers by offering all women free screening for cervical cancer and breast cancer and screening more women than men for bowel cancer
- By spending three times more money on research into female cancers than male cancers.

Men's poorer health is not an insoluble problem. Men's health experts in the UK and abroad have repeatedly shown that we can help more men make better use of health-related services and initiatives when we more put time, money and energy into making these services more male-friendly.

We invite all political parties to consider what action they will commit to taking to improve men and boys' health and life expectancy.

(2) Challenge Two: How will you help boys do better at school?

The level of education we attain can help determine how well we do in many other areas of life such as career, prosperity, health, happiness and personal safety.

Boys are underperforming girls at every stage of education, are more likely to be excluded from school and less likely to go to university. When boys get a good education they are more likely to be healthy, wealthy and free from crime--- and less likely to be unemployed, to die prematurely or to end up in prison.

Our education system excludes more boys; gets better results for girls and helps fewer boys go to university.

By the time they are five years old, boys trail girls in 11 of the 13 measures used to assess our children's educational development. At the age of 11, boys are nearly twice as likely as girls to leave primary school unable to read and write at the expected standard and girls are 57% more likely to achieve a top A* grade in their GCSE and A-level exams.

Around one million boys in England and Wales have a Special Educational Need, which means these boys need more support to help them to get an education. Boys are 2.5 times more likely to have the most severe special needs at primary school and 3 times as likely to have the most severe special needs at secondary school. Boys are also 7 times more likely to have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and 6 times more likely to have an autistic spectrum disorder.

By the time they reach adulthood, girls are a third more likely to go to university and the smaller numbers of young men who do graduate are 50% more likely to be unemployed.

We invite all political parties to consider what action they will commit to taking to ensure boys get better outcomes from the education system.

(3) Challenge Three: How will you help more fathers be involved dads?

Boys and girls with involved fathers tend to grow up healthier, wealthier and happier on average. We know, for example, that when dad's around, children do better at school in general and are more likely to be socially mobile. This means that if you are a child from a deprived background, having a father in your life makes it more likely that you will escape poverty.

There is also a strong link between fatherlessness and crime. When mums and dads are separated, boys become nine times more likely on average to commit a crime with 70% of young offenders coming from fatherless homes

Of course there are parents---mums and dads included---who pose a risk to their children, which is why we need systems in place to protect children from adults who aren't good enough parents. And we don't give good enough dads the same personal, cultural or legal support as mums to be as fully involved in their children's lives.

There's also lots of evidence that dads want more involvement in their children's lives with 82% of fathers saying they want to spend more time with their families.

In UK law, only mothers have automatic parental rights irrespective of their marital status, which in practice gives women the legal right to be the primary parent in their child's life.

More broadly, in law, policy and practice, we have made mothers the gatekeepers of men's relationship with their children. This may work for parents who have a stable, interdependent relationship where the mother is happy to be the primary carer and the father is happy to be the primary breadwinner.

However, as 50% of children now see their parents separate before they reach 16 and as women in their twenties earn more than their male counterparts, a system that always assumes that mum is the primary parent may no longer reflect the needs and aspirations of men and women.

Much work has been done to give women equal rights and opportunities to be breadwinners, in helping women to make this transition we have failed to ensure that men are also given equal rights and opportunities to be involved parents.

We invite all political parties to consider what action they will commit to taking to support fathers of all types and backgrounds to be involved dads.

(4) Challenge Four: How will you reduce male suicide?

There is probably no starker or more undeniable indicator of the inequalities that men and boys face than the high male suicide rate.

Male suicide is a global problem with an average of one man killing himself every minute of every day. In all but one of 105 countries that we have statistics for, men are significantly more likely than women to take their own lives.

In Britain, men are three times more likely to die from suicide. There are many factors that increase men's risk of suicide including homelessness, imprisonment, school exclusion, addiction, unemployment, fatherlessness and

age group. For young men in the UK, for example, suicide is now the biggest single cause of death.

What action will your party take to reduce the rate of male suicide in the UK.

10 Surprising Facts About Male Suicide

- 1.** When boys are excluded from school they are 19 times more likely to commit suicide than those who are not excluded.
- 2.** Researchers in Sweden found that boys whose parents had separated were more than twice as likely to attempt suicide.
- 3.** Separated men are twice as likely to kill themselves as other men and six times more likely than separated women to die from suicide.
- 4.** Eight out of 10 suicidal young men have experienced bullying and seven out of 10 have experienced violence from an adult.
- 5.** Men from the poorest backgrounds living in deprived areas are ten times more likely to kill themselves than men from high socio-economic backgrounds living in the most affluent areas.
- 6.** Men are more likely to be unemployed than women and unemployed men are two to three times more likely to kill themselves compared with other men.
- 7.** Men who become unable to fulfill the male provider role seem to be vulnerable to suicide. Research found that more than 1,000 people in the UK killed themselves because of the economic impact of the recession and 84% of them were men.
- 8.** Young men under 24 who leave the armed forces are two to three times more likely to commit suicide than the general population. In 2012 more British soldiers killed themselves than were killed in Afghanistan.
- 9.** Male prisoners are five times more likely to die from suicide than the general population and young male offenders are at even greater risk of suicide being 18 times more likely to kill themselves.
- 10.** Men and boys who become socially excluded have an increased risk of suicide. Boys who end up in care, for example, are four to five times more likely to attempt suicide. Men who become homeless and sleep rough are also at greater risk being 9 times more likely to kill themselves than the general population.

(5) Challenge Five: How will you tackle crime involving men and boys?

High crime rates make everyone feel unhappy and unsafe. Men and boys are more likely to commit crime, more likely to be victims of crime and more likely to be harshly punished and imprisoned.

In terms of being a victim of violent crime:

- Men are twice as likely to be victims of all violent crime
- Young men are four times more likely than the rest of the population to be victims of violence.
- Three quarters (76%) of victims of robbery and mugging are men and boys
- Half (52%) of male victims of robbery and mugging are under 21
- Three young men aged 20-24 are killed every week

The three key inequalities that seem to put men and boys at greater risk of offending are:

- Fatherlessness
- Poor education
- Addictions and mental health problems

We have already highlighted the fact that around 70% of young offenders come from fatherless homes, in the section on fathers. There is a clear link between educational failure and criminal behaviour amongst men and boys.

Firstly, boys are three-to-four times more likely to be excluded from school and children who are excluded from school account for 90% of all young offenders. Secondly, boys are also three times more likely to have severe learning difficulties and amongst adult prisoners, 20-30% of adult prisoners have learning difficulties. Thirdly, boys are more than twice as likely to have very poor literacy skills and 82% of prisoners are at or below the writing level of an 11-year-old.

The links between crime, addiction and poor mental health are also stark. 90% of men in prison have at least one mental disorder and more than 70% have two or more diagnosed mental disorders. More than half of offenders link their crime to a drug problem while two thirds of men sentenced are hazardous drinkers or severely dependent on alcohol.

Victims estimate that their assailant had been drinking in:

- Half of violent incidents
- Two-thirds of woundings
- Over a third of domestic abuse incidents

Failing to deal with men's addictions and mental health issues and give men the help and support they need puts us all at greater risk of crime.

Once caught up in the criminal justice men in general find they are treated more harshly than women who commit comparable crimes.

When men and boys come into contact with the criminal justice system they are more likely to end up in prison and receive a harsher punishment.

Female offenders account for more than a third of formal police cautions, nearly a quarter of court defendants but fewer than 5% of those sent to prison.

For every type of offence, a higher proportion of men are given a custodial sentence; men are given longer sentences than women on average (11 months compared to 17 months for males); men serve a longer proportion of their sentence and women are 50% more likely to be released early on a home detention curfew.

Research suggests that the most unequal countries have higher rates of crime than average and harsher prison regimes. We are all responsible for our own behaviour and experiencing inequality puts men and boys at greater risk of both committing crime and becoming a victim.

Tackling the inequalities that cause crime by and against men and boys can create safer, happier communities for everyone. We invite all political parties to consider what action they take to address crime involving men and boys.

(6) Challenge Six: How will you reduce violence involving men and boys?

In recent decades there has been a growing focus on tackling violence against women and girls, but no such focus on helping men and boys.

And yet globally, men and boys are four times more likely to die a violent death than women and girls. It seems we are collectively more tolerant of all types of violence, abuse and harm when the person suffering is a man or a boy.

As a result male victims are less likely to access help and support, particularly when the perpetrator is female. If we can learn how to treat all violence victims equally, it will make a safer society for everyone.

At present, more than half a million men and boys worldwide die violent deaths every year.

Every minute of every hour of every day, a man somewhere in the world dies a violent death. Men and boys account for more than 80% of all victims of violent death, making us four times more likely than women and girls to be killed violently.

Men and boys are more likely to be killed by an enemy in times of war and more likely to be murdered by family, friends and strangers in peacetime.

The fact that we are collectively more tolerant of violence against men and boys than women and girls is demonstrated by the number of men killed each year in the UK.

Men and boys are more than twice as likely to be murdered with seven out of 10 murder victims being male. In 2008/9 for example:

- There were 651 homicides
- 71% of the victims were male
- Men were 7 times more likely than women to be killed by a stranger
- Men were 60% more likely to be killed by someone they knew like a partner, family member, friend or acquaintance

Men and boys are at greater risk of being attacked, being the main victims of both male violence and female violence, with an estimated 150 acts of wounding, assault and robbery being committed against men every hour of every day in England and Wales.

Research spanning over 40 years has consistently found that women are just as likely to perpetrate domestic violence as men. The key difference is that women are more likely to be injured or killed.

Yet men still represent a substantial proportion of victims who are assaulted (50%), injured (30%) or killed (25%) during an assault by an intimate partner.

Male victims of domestic violence are less likely to get the help and support they need. Men are twice as likely to tell no-one about the violence and are far less likely to see their abusive partner brought to justice.

Rape and sexual abuse is mostly thought to be a crime that men commit against women and girls. Yet official statistics show that around 1 in 6 men and boys will experience some form of sexual abuse in their lifetime.

Most work to prevent violence focuses on male perpetrators, as a result women who commit violence are less likely to be held to account.

Female perpetrators of violence and abuse are more likely to attack men and boys (than women and girls) in general and less likely to be prosecuted.

Nearly half of boys (46%) who report being sexually abused by a parent to Childline, for example, are abused by their mothers, but fewer than 5% of people on the sex offenders register are women.

One report found that a staggering 86% of people sexually abused by women were not believed the first time they told someone about the abuse

As with domestic violence, male victims of sexual abuse find it much harder to come forward and get help with female rape victims nearly twice as likely to report the crime than male rape victims.

We invite all political parties to consider what action they will commit to taking to reduce all types of violence involving men and boys.

(7) Challenge Seven: How will you support male workers and male carers?

Most conversations about gender and work focus on the inequality that women face. A common story told about masculine and feminine gender roles is that working is a 'privilege' and childcare is a 'burden'.

The logic of this view is that men enjoy the privilege of earning while women suffer the burden of parenting. In reality, both roles have costs and benefits.

Men make a huge financial contribution to the country with male workers paying 72% of income tax and dads bringing home two-thirds of family earnings. Men enjoy certain benefits from their careers and taking on the masculine provider also comes at a cost:

- 96% of people who die at work are men as are the majority of the 20,000 people who die from worked-related causes each year. Men are four times more likely to die of occupational cancers for example.
- Men are more likely to be unemployed, more likely to be made redundant and less likely to be re-employed than women.
- Men are more likely to miss out on the benefits of parenting and family life.
- Men are more likely to experience being unemployed or unemployed

The expectation that men should be financial providers is reflected in the fact that disabled men and single dads with children are far more likely to be employed than their female counterparts.

We seem to be collectively less supportive of men who fail to be economic providers for themselves and their families. As a result more men who fail economically end up homeless, in prison or killing themselves, with men accounting for 84% of suicides that were linked to the recession.

For men who are employed, those with high job strain (i.e. lots of pressure but little power) are four times more likely to have a heart attack. Men also take less time off sick on average and spend fewer years in retirement than women.

Young men entering the workforce are less education than young women on average, account for 60% of youth unemployment and 70% of long-term young unemployment and are paid less than women on average throughout their twenties.

When they become parents, 59% of dads report experiencing a conflict between work like and family and life. Men who don't take on a role of economic provider because of their caring responsibilities--- for example, being a full-time dad or caring for a partner or other family member---face very different challenges to female carers that are rarely acknowledged or understood.

Men's experiences as workers and carers are often different to women's experiences and require special consideration when developing public policy. We invite all political parties to consider what action they take to address the distinct challenges that men and boys face as workers and carers.

(8) Challenge Eight: How will you end male homelessness?

Homelessness is a clear sign that our society isn't working for everyone.

With 72% of homeless people having mental health problems and 82% having physical health problems, it is shocking but not surprising that they are nine times more likely to kill themselves and die 30 years younger than the rest of the population.

Homeless men are more likely to have been in care, excluded from school or separated from their father as a boy. It is our failure to give boys a good start life that leads to 90% of rough sleepers being men---and our failure to help men with their problems that keeps them there.

Tackling homelessness as a gender problem could help us become more effective at the many other issues that disproportionately affect men and boys. We invite all political parties to consider what action they take to address male homelessness.

(9) Challenge Nine: How will you protect vulnerable men and boys?

We know that some of the countries most vulnerable men and boys ---such as those with mental health problems and learning disabilities; the long-term unemployed, the elderly, the homeless, those with long-term illnesses, those in care and leaving care----have specific needs that aren't always being adequately met.

Our systems of social care are often primed to consider the specific needs of women and girls but rarely consider the specific needs of men and boys as a distinct. Taking time to consider how we can better meet the needs of the most vulnerable men and boys will help us create a more civil and equitable society.

We invite all political parties to consider what action they take to support the most vulnerable men and boys in our society.

(10) Challenge Ten: How will you help men in all their diversity?

Men and boys from different communities (for example --- black men, gay men, disabled men) may face specific issues because they are men.

We know for example that gay men are twice as likely to be victims of homophobic hate crime as lesbian women and 96% of racially motivated murder victims are men and boys.

We also know that boys are more likely to experience certain disabilities and poor black boys with special educational needs are 168 times more likely to be excluded from school than richer white girls who don't have a special educational need.

These figures are just the tip of the iceberg and much more work is needed to understand how being male impacts the disadvantage, discrimination and inequality that men and boys of different backgrounds experience.

To help us create a society that is fair and equal for all, we invite all political parties to consider how gender affects men and boys from different backgrounds.

(11) Challenge Eleven: How will you end unnecessary male circumcision?

We know that British boys are being damaged (and in extreme circumstances killed) by male circumcision, a medically unnecessary practice that isn't currently monitored and regulated in the UK.

The Council of Europe recently informed its 47 member states that medically unnecessary circumcision is a violation of boys' human rights and called on all member states to introduce legislation and policies to improve the protection of boys from the risks of circumcision.

In a groundbreaking move the council's Parliamentary Assembly declared that it is "particularly worried about a category of violation of the physical integrity of children" which includes "the circumcision of young boys for religious reasons".

The Assembly has strongly recommended that its member states, which include the UK, take the following action:

1. Get clear on the extent of medically unnecessary circumcision in their country (around half a million boys in the UK are thought to be at risk but there is no official figure available)
2. Clearly define the medical, sanitary and other conditions that all male circumcisions should meet (this would include defining whether or not circumcision without anaesthetic or consent, by non-medical staff in non-medical settings should continue to be tolerated in the UK).
3. Promote greater awareness of how medically unnecessary male circumcision is performed and what the risks are.
4. To introduce legislation and policies to improve the protection of boys from the risks of medically unnecessary male circumcision.
5. To raise awareness of the alternatives to medically unnecessary male circumcision.
6. To actively initiate public debate, including intercultural and interreligious dialogue, aimed at reaching consensus on striking the balance between boys' human rights and the rights and religious freedoms of parents and families.
7. To raise awareness about the need for boys to participate in decisions concerning their physical integrity and to consider introducing an age of consent preventing boys from being circumcised until they are old enough to choose.

The Council of Europe is larger than and separate from the European Union and its role is to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law across the continent. Unlike the EU, the Council of Europe cannot make binding laws, but it does create conventions—like the European Convention on Human Rights—that member states commit to.

In recent years the Council of Europe has been working to protect children's human rights, through its Strategy for the Rights of the Child. This strategy does not currently include guidance on male circumcision. One of the recommendations the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has made is that medically unnecessary male circumcision is included in the preparation and adoption of the new Strategy for the Rights of the Child which launches in 2015.

The UK government is not currently engaged in any of the seven steps recommended by the Council of Europe. We invite all political parties to consider what action they take to ensure these 7 steps are addressed in the next parliament.

(12) Challenge 12: How will you help men and boys to strengthen their communities?

Boys and girls can benefit from the influence of a broad range of adult role models.

All children benefit from male role models and for boys in particular, men represent the transition they will make from childhood into adulthood. Boys generally spend less time with adult men than girls spend with adult women for a variety of reasons:

- Fathers spend more time at work and less time on childcare
- When parents use informal and formal childcare the provider is generally female
- A quarter of fathers are separated from their children
- The majority of teachers and support workers in schools are women
- The majority of public sector workers are women
- The majority of community and voluntary sector workers are women

Men are significantly under-represented in schools with 97% of state nursery teachers and 88% of primary school teachers in England being women. One in four boys and girls are taught in primary schools where there are no male teachers.

The under-representation of men in schools is further exacerbated by the fact that the majority of support staff and school volunteers are women and mums are more likely than dads to go into school.

Research suggests 8 out of 10 dads say they'd like to be more involved in their children's education and some schools harness this desire by taking a proactive approach to giving dads more opportunities to be involved in school life.

Research by the Big Lottery (Invisible Men report) has also found that men and boys are less likely to be involved in or benefit from the community projects that the lottery funds.

There is a small yet dynamic men and boys sector in the UK that demonstrates men's willingness and ability to be involved in community projects when given the opportunity. This sector is largely ignored by Government.

On International Men's Day 2011 a broad alliance of over 100 individuals and organisations working with men and boys wrote to the then Equalities Minister, Lynn Featherstone, welcoming the fact that the Government had consulted with women and women's groups on how government engages with and listens to women and asked if the Government would also undertake "to consult with men and men's groups about how it can respond more effectively to the specific needs of men and boys in the UK?"

The Equalities Minister never replied to our letter and a Home Office official sent a response that didn't answer the one question we asked. In the run up to the 2015 election we invite politicians of all parties to engage with the men and boys sector in the UK and explore how you can engage men in strengthening communities and in responding to the 12 manifesto challenges in this report.

REFERENCES

Unless otherwise stated the statistics outlined in this report are drawn from the book Equality For Men by Glen Poole. For more information see www.equality4men.com/book/