1. Name of petitioner
Alison Waugh and Jackie Walls

2. Petition title
Male victims of domestic abuse/violence

3. Petition text
Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that all publicly funded action (campaigns, publications, action plans, projects, training programmes, etc.) on domestic abuse/violence are overhauled to fully acknowledge the extent to which men are at the receiving end and to address the needs of male victims and their children.

4. Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition
We have set up a blog related to this petition (http://meninscotland.wordpress.com/)

We became interested in men’s experience of domestic abuse/violence after being deeply shaken when men we knew revealed the ordeals they were going through. We have witnessed the continuing, deepening despair of these men who, over many years, have had their lives destroyed and those of their children unnecessarily damaged.

While trying in vain to find help for these men we have witnessed a proliferation of publicly funded campaigns and services aimed at addressing only the needs of women and their children who have experienced domestic abuse and violence. The men’s plight was rendered completely invisible or apparently unimportant.

Each of us, separately at first, tried to raise awareness of the issue to help these men who had suffered not only abuse but the added pain of having their experience denied.

In the process we have met or heard about many more abused men. We have been astonished by the number of people (men and women) who have approached us knowing our interest in the matter to tell us about their male friends and relatives, suffering in long term abusive relationships involving serious violence, psychological, financial and emotional abuse and controlling behaviour.

Many believed that these were isolated situations because the assumption
is that men are usually perpetrators of domestic abuse, not victims. Such has been the power of the relentless but incomplete public information on the subject. We have been dismayed by the number of people in positions of influence who have told us they have personal knowledge of abused men but did not wish to 'rock the boat'.

We have also been disturbed by examples of how institutional abuse of power can intimidate male victims into silence and isolation. In one case we know, a distraught father who had continued to live with the abuse until it became life-threatening was told by the ‘independent’ solicitor appointed by the Sheriff Court to write a child welfare report that if he continued telling her the truth about his former wife’s violence he would not be allowed to see his children.

Below are some of the actions we have taken over the past two and a half years. We have become increasingly convinced that there is a serious issue that needs to be tackled in a country that praises itself for supporting victims and addressing domestic abuse.

3/03/07 (AW) Email to (then) prospective SNP MSP.
I contacted Maureen Watt in response to her excellent contribution to a radio programme dealing with domestic abuse of men. I offered to provide her with more information on the subject, thinking that she would be taking the issue forward. She told me that Victim Support would offer help, but when I called VS on behalf of an abused male friend they told me they did not have anything to offer. The prospective MSP became an MSP and the issue appeared to drop off her list of priorities.

4/09/07 (AW) Email to all Scottish Ministers
I raised the issue of the marginalisation of men, including family law (causing difficulties for men who try to maintain meaningful contact with their children after family break-up) and the lack of proactive recognition or support for men suffering domestic abuse. I received no response from any minister, but a month later I did receive a response from the Violence Against Women Team in the Scottish Government Equality Unit. They explained that the Scottish Government recognised the ‘gendered analysis’ of domestic abuse. I found it difficult to understand how ‘recognising’ domestic abuse as an abuse of male power could help explain or address the plight of a man struggling to survive relentless abuse by his former wife.

I was also told that the Gadd Report (2002), commissioned to look at Domestic Abuse Against Men in Scotland, had concluded that a ‘specific agency for abused men’ was not needed. When I read the report for myself it was apparent that there were serious questions about the research methodology. However, its conclusion still did not appear to square with its own findings. Dr Gadd has since admitted that some of the men in the study suffered ‘harrowing experiences’.

The report found: ‘The police, amongst other statutory service providers, did seem concerned about the lack of referral agencies available to support abused men’. It also acknowledged that ‘... the relative under-resourcing of agencies that provide specialist services for gay men and/or abused men … make the case for urging pre-existing statutory service providers to
advertise more widely their capacity to meet the needs of men experiencing domestic abuse.'

An FOI to the Scottish Government last year asked how much it had spent on actively publicising such services (if indeed any exist) in fulfilment of the Gadd recommendation. The answer was, "Nothing".

On 4 March 2009 The Scotsman ran an opinion piece by John Forsyth on the shortcomings of the Gadd Report and the unwillingness of Dr Gadd to speak in support of his own research. Nevertheless, Scottish Government Ministers and spokespeople have cited the Gadd Report as a justification for doing nothing for abused men for the past 7 years.

6/10/07 (AW) Submission to Gender Equality Duty website
I hoped the new ‘Gender Equality Duty’ (GED) might at last remedy the apparent discrimination against men in public policy on domestic abuse. However, I discovered that as far as domestic abuse is concerned, 'Gender Equality' means eliminating 'violence against women' only. I clicked on the comment button on the GED site to suggest that this did not appear, to me, to represent gender equality.

Once again a response arrived from the VAW Team. Again I was reminded of the 'gendered analysis' of domestic abuse, 'recognised' by the Scottish Government. Again there was no acknowledgement of the needs of abused men or their children either as a group or in need of support as individuals.

(AW) Telephone enquiry to Domestic Abuse Helpline
Around this time I called the Scottish Domestic Abuse Helpline to ask for help on behalf of a male friend, but the operator had nothing to suggest. I asked if perhaps few men called for help but was told many did.

(AW) Educational materials
As a teacher I was aware of educational materials (Respect Packs) on the subject of domestic abuse. Produced by Zero Tolerance they focus on violence against women. I discussed this with one of the staff responsible for running in-service courses for teachers on these materials. He admitted that his department insisted on this single track approach. I was similarly concerned that the ‘Keeping Myself Safe’ resources for schools, produced by Learning Curve, also minimise the experience of abused men and their children. This must be bewildering for the children of abused fathers as every example given and all the teaching outcomes concern only men as abusers and women as victims. This issue of honesty in teaching children about domestic abuse has also been raised in the Scotsman (2/12/09) by Hugh Reilly, and I return to this theme later.

(AW) Domestic Abuse Courses
I discovered in-service courses in my local authority on 'Violence against Women' and 'Dealing with Abusive Men'. I was concerned that staff were not being trained to recognise that children may come from homes that do not fit the abusive man/abused woman stereotype, and that such children may miss out on necessary support. I raised the matter with an equalities official who informed me that it was not in her remit to challenge this imbalance. She told me in any case abused "men should wait another 35
I signed up for a day's course on domestic abuse, run by the Lothian Violence Against Women Training Consortium. This is one of 15 training consortia set up to implement the Scottish Government's violence against women's national training strategy. The course focused entirely on emphasising how women are suppressed, how abusive men could be and how hard it can be for the women they abuse to escape. I quite accept the horror of the abuse described but there was no recognition that women can be equally abusive and men just as badly damaged, as I have witnessed at first hand. I have yet to find any training for staff on domestic abuse of men.

**Looking beyond the official public information**

We became increasingly disturbed by the disjunction between the information on domestic abuse/violence presented by statutory bodies and the voluntary agencies that dominate the public narrative and the evidence before our eyes. Yet online we began to find sources of information and independent academic research (see blog) that confirmed what we were learning about from the individuals we had come to know who are directly affected. These sources are rarely cited in official publications but are peer reviewed and have much to offer the public debate. If we could find this information we do not understand how salaried researchers seemed to miss them.

We are now in no doubt that there is ample credible evidence beyond our first hand experience and evidence from friends and colleagues, that a significant number of men as well as women suffer long term controlling, violent and psychologically abusive behaviour by a partner resulting in extreme fear, physical and emotional damage, with long term mental and physical health consequences. By ignoring this we put children and even society at risk.

**Mankind**

We discovered The ManKind Initiative, a national non-public funded charity supporting male victims of domestic abuse. Based in Taunton, Somerset, it operates a national help-line, signposts victims to local authorities, housing, the police and other agencies and also undertakes lectures, workshops and provides information to raise awareness. They receive several calls from Scotland each week. One Scottish man helped by Mankind was able in turn to offer advice to others via the Mankind helpline. He told me that the most shocking thing he found was the complete isolation of each man who called. Until discovering Mankind each felt he was the only man being victimised by his partner, consequently feeling it must somehow be his fault. He added that what 'destroyed' him during his years as a victim was the complete lack of anyone he could tell.

**(AW) June 2008 Letter/submission to Alex Salmond**

I wrote to the First Minister with my concerns about how men in Scotland are marginalised in the public narrative with regard to domestic violence and other issues of public policy that tend to exclude fathers in particular. I attached evidence and links to relevant documents and sites. I was aware that the FM’s signature was already on the VAW Statement of Intent, but I saw no reason why full support for women should necessarily
exclude any consideration for men. Apparently it did: he expressed the view that ‘violence in the home … is overwhelmingly *(my emphasis)* perpetrated by men against their female partners or ex-partners’ and that ‘violence against women remains a priority for action’. He gave no indication that any action to support men was being considered.

[*Earlier this year the independent UK Statistical Authority advised the Crown Prosecution Service and the Welsh Assembly that the phrase ‘overwhelming majority’ in describing abuse of women by men should not be used as it ‘is inconsistent with the results of Home Office Studies of intimate and interpersonal violence in England and Wales.’ ]

The most recent (Dec 2009) Scottish Crime and Justice Survey *(Partner Abuse, Table A1.2)* suggests there may be little if any real difference at all.

**(JW) Fife Services**

Jackie Walls also became engaged with the issue when a long standing male friend confided in her the details of long term abuse and violent behaviour by his wife. Jackie had had no idea such behaviour could be perpetrated by a woman and had accepted the notion that abuse is what some men do to women. She sought help for her friend from the local agencies that are funded and advertise themselves as providing support for victims of domestic abuse. She found all the doors were closed to him. She let it be known locally therefore that she would set up a Scottish Men’s Aid site and gave out her phone number. She was overwhelmed with callers. She could provide a listening ear but had nothing practical to offer. She realised from the nature of the calls (many men in real distress) that specialist services are required for men, in particular to deal with their fear.

She suspended the website and began lobbying for local services on the assumption that if a good infrastructure already existed for women's services it could surely be extended to cater for men in similar plight. She made several approaches to Fife Domestic and Sexual Abuse Partnership *(FDSAP)* for support, advice and asking to be involved in domestic abuse events and forums but did not receive a helpful or encouraging response.

**(JW) Presentation to Fife Councillors, Touch Community Centre, Dunfermline. Chaired by Councillor Walker.**

Jackie realised she needed to focus her efforts at her own local level. With a working name of FMVODA (Fife Male Victims of Domestic Abuse) she arranged at her own expense a 'briefing' for Fife councillors. All councillors were sent individual invitations. An email was leaked to her showing that council leaders had instructed councillors not to attend or respond to the invitation. The briefing comprised a speech by Jackie and a presentation by journalist, John Forsyth, who had researched the subject in some depth. The event met with a good response from the 5 councillors who did attend. Several others who could not attend intimated their support. Observers from Fife Police and FDSAP attended.

14/05/09 Motion to Fife Council

Subsequent to the briefing councillors Dempsey and Caird put a motion to the full Fife Council pressing for development of services for male victims of domestic abuse. A small working party of councillors was formed
resulting in the need for support for abused men now appearing in some of the Partnership documentation. An undertaking has been made to remove some of the acknowledged ‘inappropriate’ wording that is still currently in their 2008-11 Action Plan. The Fife Councillors have taken a brave lead on this issue but they need to have support from the Scottish Government.

**Fife Police meeting**
A meeting was organised by FMVODA and Detective Chief Inspector Lee Dickson of Fife Constabulary who stated that Fife Police would welcome the establishment of an organisation to which their officers could refer abused men and would be willing to support such an organisation while confirming that their own services are non-gender specific.

**(JW) BBC Radio 4 programme: Give Me a Voice**
Jackie and three of the abused men who had come forward were interviewed and the men’s stories were told. In all cases serious, long term violence and psychological abuse was perpetrated by a former wife or female partner. In all cases the men still lived in constant fear and in two of the cases, the men continue to suffer from post traumatic stress. One of them had himself been arrested and spent a night in the cells after he called the police when his partner attempted to murder him.

**(AW) FOI – on publicity campaigns**
I obtained details of all government publicity campaigns on domestic abuse since 2000. I have examined each one closely and found all either explicitly stated or implied men are abusers while women and children are their victims. Not one showed a male victim.

Strathclyde Police has just launched a TV and press campaign for Christmas. The ads are to be commended for including males in their mute series of victims. STV news reported this while highlighting the case of a woman killed by her partner. Strathclyde Police’s own figures show 11 homicides in 2008/9 connected with domestic abuse: 7 were women; 4 were men. Information on partner homicide in Scotland through another FOI request revealed that in the years 2003/4 to 2007/8 there were 40 females killed by a male partner and 28 men killed by a female partner: 42% of the victims were male.

**(AW) Query to local authority re CEHR Campaign: Map of Gaps**
On discovering that my local authority appeared to be well served in services for abused women I enquired about the services it provides for abused men. I received responses from three council equalities officials who in turn gave me details of services that they said ‘supported men’. When I checked, none of them did. Eventually a fourth respondent was honest enough to admit there is nothing specifically for men in Edinburgh who experience domestic abuse.

**(AW) Motions presented to Educational Institute of Scotland AGM**
In June 2009, I presented two motions to the EIS AGM:

Motion 27 “That this AGM recognise the destructive effects of domestic physical and emotional abuse on men as well as women and children, and on children abused by a parent of either gender. This AGM instruct Council
to update EIS publications and information to schools accordingly."

The Conference agreed and passed the motion.

Motion 28: That this AGM call on the Scottish Government:
1) to ensure that publicly funded teaching materials on domestic abuse do not discriminate against the children of abused fathers
2) to ensure that teaching materials on domestic abuse provides boys and young men with the knowledge that they may become victims of domestic abuse in equivalent terms to the material that raises such awareness amongst girls

This was remitted to Council. The issues are still being considered.

5. Petition background information
The Scottish Government and the previous Scottish Executive have made tackling domestic abuse/violence a priority. Over £100m has been spent or committed (1999–2011) in supporting organisations to provide refuges, counselling, legal support, help with housing and other services and projects for victims and their children. There is a list of 22 standards to which all providers of domestic abuse services should aspire. The Scottish Government also runs public information campaigns on domestic abuse; produces a stream of publications; commissions school educational materials; funds information websites for victims and their children; has set up training courses for staff in social services, education, the procurator fiscal service and voluntary organisations, and funds a 24hr phone helpline.

Every single one of these is designed to raise awareness of, and encourage reporting of violence against women and to address the needs of female victims and their children. Not a penny from all those millions has gone to fund services or campaigns specifically designed for the needs of abused men and their children; there is no awareness-raising about their experience of domestic abuse, and no active encouragement to report it.

There will now be (welcome) funding for a programme (The Caledonian System) for male perpetrators willing to address their abusive behaviour, but not even a suggestion that any female perpetrators, let alone their partners and children, might also benefit from such programmes.

Yet police domestic abuse figures over the past 9 years have shown an overall increase of incidents of abuse where men are recorded as victims of 176%, while the increase for female victims has been 39%. The rate of increase of male victims has been faster than that of female victims in every year since the series began in 1999/2000. We are not talking about small numbers: in 2008/09 police forces recorded men as victim in 7,336 (14%) of domestic abuse incidents to which they were called, in which the perpetrator was female and a further 546 (1%) in same sex cases.

Police figures, of course, do not tell the full story of domestic abuse. It is widely recognised that men are less inclined to report abuse than women. The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (Partner Abuse) published on December 15 2009 revealed that only 8% of incidents in which men experienced domestic abuse during the past 12 months became known to the police compared to 35% for women.
A reluctance of males to report abuse or emotional problems of any sort is also recognised in a Childline Casenote. In 2002-03, in its report, ‘Boys Allowed’ it was noted that boys made only a fifth of calls to the helpline. Not convinced that boys suffered so much less than girls and concerned about the much higher tendency of young males to commit suicide, Childline initiated an advertising campaign to encourage more boys to come forward and their counsellors also received specific training on working with boys. Now one third of calls are from boys. This could be a model for approaching underreporting by male victims.

The experiences of males need not be undermined by the creation of a false competition with the experiences of females. A gender equality perception that allows particular support for women as victims should not be mistaken for an excuse to do nothing for men as victims. We believe all victims of crime or anti-social behaviour have the same rights, as citizens of a compassionate Scotland, to appropriate support.

However, a political narrative, embraced by the current Scottish Government and its predecessors, has concentrated on domestic abuse/violence as a problem almost entirely for women victims. This has tended to mislead the public about the issue by minimising the fact that domestic abuse/violence also affects a very significant number of men.

Research findings published in the recent Scottish Crime and Justice Survey reveal that the extent and nature of partner abuse is massively at odds with the present public narrative on domestic abuse/violence. This mismatch between reality and government policy needs to be addressed without delay.

There are at present no services in Scotland, specifically designed for the needs of abused men and their children, nor any general front line services that adequately address their problems. For example, while Victim Support has encountered ‘many cases of serious violence carried out by women’, their Lothian and Borders Area Director, Alan McCloskey told Edinburgh’s Evening News (6/10/09) that the ‘lack of dedicated support services for male victims of domestic abuse… should be addressed’.

Anyone seeking information and advice for a male victim may well find that a service that sounds as if it might have something to offer quickly turns into a dead end. On arriving at the Domestic Abuse There’s no Excuse website, one is greeted by the faces of nine women. Even the single page devoted to men as victims has the faces of nine women on it and references to the plight of women victims. The page for male victims has a link to the Men’s Advice Line. However this is a part time helpline funded by the Home Office for men in England and Wales only. It carries no information for men in Scotland though it does tell abused men who call that they ’will be believed’ – an important right offered by no part of the domestic abuse apparatus to men in Scotland.

Children seeking help through the Scottish Domestic Abuse website or through individual police forces are linked to the Women’s Aid Site for children, The Hideout. Although it begins commendably gender fair, it also
becomes a dead end for children with abused dads. The [Children's pages](#) on the Scottish Government domestic abuse site only mention abused mums.

We are not calling for any reduction in services that actively help women and children who experience domestic abuse/violence. However these or similar services should also be provided as a matter of course for the men (and their children) who are being damaged by domestic abuse/violence. As first steps we are calling for:

1) The Scottish Government, local authorities and public agencies to acknowledge publicly that each individual who suffers from domestic abuse/violence is entitled as a basic right, to recognition and support according to need, not gender (or, of course, ethnic/social background, age, dis/ability or sexual orientation).

2) A requirement for all publicly funded websites, publicity campaigns, literature, training and educational materials on domestic abuse/violence to provide full and impartial information that does not set one group of victims above another.

3) The Scottish Government to facilitate/fund/extend provision of domestic abuse helplines and other support services, with staff trained/experienced in understanding the issues relevant to all affected groups, explicitly including men and their children, experiencing domestic abuse/violence.

4) The Scottish Government to seek out and take account of information and advice from impartial individuals and organisations with experience and knowledge of domestic abuse/violence as it affects all identifiable groups; where necessary be proactive in commissioning research about and encouraging reporting by male or other under-represented victims.

5) Provision of domestic abuse support services that meet the [Service Standards](#) (at present specified for women’s services) for all victims.

6. Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament’s website as an e-petition?

**YES**

7. Closing date for e-petition

15 January 2010

8. Comments to stimulate on-line discussion

The definition of domestic abuse has been broadened significantly in recent years away from direct violence. Most of the behaviours that have been added to the definition to include aspects of controlling behaviour that are particularly experienced by women though also experienced by men. What aspects of controlling behaviour particularly experienced by men could usefully be added to the definition? e.g. threat of losing contact with children.

Some fathers report they felt they were subjected to institutional abuse by public sector agencies. For example, despite the Parental Involvement in Education Act schools found it “a burden” to communicate separately with non resident parents. Their insistence on communicating with the parent with care became a means of controlling information about the child and the school community. Are there other forms of institutional abuse that should be reconsidered in the interests of the child?