

10. Ways forward

Men's attitudes, beliefs and actions affect progress towards a very wide range of social goals – including promoting gender equality and strategies towards its achievement. If men 'create problems and experience problems', then they must also be part of the solution. If we are to improve the lives of men, women and children, then men's participation in achieving change is vital. Indeed, without their involvement, and shifts in the distribution of power between men and women (and between different groups of men), then gender equality will be far harder – if not impossible – to realise.

Efforts to involve men in gender equality strategies have been endorsed at international level by the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and at EU level by the Council of Ministers (see 'Men, boys and policy', pages 28-30). There are also some examples of attempts to build this approach into the policies and programmes of international organisations, especially in relation to family planning and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, violence against women and poverty and development.⁶³⁷ In this section, we explore comparable ways forward in the UK context.

This conclusion explores sites and strategies for taking this work forward and highlights some key elements of good practice in working with men. The chapter concludes with a set of 'core' recommendations; these are supplemented by the specific recommendations in relation to particular areas of work, identified in the previous sections.

Sites and strategies

There are various arenas through which gender change is highlighted, modelled, articulated and achieved. Below, we identify and consider action in four of these arenas: by government, in organisations, through the media and by men working together.

Public policies for gender equality

Many mainstream government policies tend to be shaped, either explicitly or more often implicitly, around traditional notions of masculinity as the 'norm'. For example, the benefits system has tended to prioritise a 'male breadwinner' model of social security provision. 'Contributory' benefits, such as national insurance and pensions, have generally privileged a typically 'male' employment pattern of full-time, long-term labour market participation. By contrast, 'categorical benefits' (which are not means-tested or dependent on contributions), such as child benefit, disability living allowance and carers' allowance are more likely to be paid to women, but they are usually paid at a lower level than contributory benefits. Many benefits also treat a couple as comprising a claimant and a dependent, with the benefit paid to one partner for use by them both; in practice, the man is more often the claimant, and he therefore tends to receive and control the available resources.⁶³⁸ Overall, the benefits system has tended to undervalue forms of unpaid work, such as domestic care and community and voluntary work, reinforcing women's roles in these activities.

Another example is criminal justice policies. These are substantially targeted at men and boys, yet there is relative silence about masculinity issues in debate about policy formulation. Indeed, the approaches of male-dominated institutions, such as the police force, judiciary, and prison system, routinely draw on unspoken assumptions about masculinity, and reinforce 'tough' responses. In the process, the needs of both male and female workers and offenders can be marginalised.

Conversely, many services (e.g. in relation to health, social care and child welfare) are largely geared towards women, both supporting – but also entrenching – their roles as primary carers. This also reflects stereotypical beliefs (not least among men themselves) that men should be powerful and

637. See, for instance: Connell R., *Masculinities, Power and the Epidemic: Messages of Social Research*, speech at international symposium on *Politicising Masculinities: Beyond the Personal*, 15-18 October 2007, Dakar; Ruxton S. (2004) *Gender Equality and Men: Learning from Practice*, Oxford: Oxfam GB; Pease B., Pringle K. (2001) *A Man's World: Changing Men's Practices in a Globalized World*, London: Zed Books

638. Bennett F. (2005) *Gender and benefits, Working Paper Series No. 30*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission

should not display any weaknesses or vulnerabilities. These assumptions have frequently led to men being overlooked or 'screened out' by service providers, regarded either as too dangerous to engage with (sometimes understandably so), or as of secondary importance in comparison to women.⁶³⁹ Whilst it remains true that women's needs are not fully met by service providers, men's needs are more likely to be invisible to them, and services often struggle to engage with them effectively.

Other policies have had different impacts on men and women, but the implications for gender equality have not been sufficiently analysed or addressed. For instance, the introduction of the national minimum wage has had a greater impact on women's pay (although a significant gender pay gap continues). Yet the focus of 'welfare to work' strategies has been on paid employment, and funding for employment training has been overwhelmingly directed at men (see section on 'Work', page 45).

The lack of gender analysis in relation to policy is also evident in relation to the statistics upon which policy is based. For instance, the Government's annual Household Below Average Income (HBAI) figures – which are used to assess poverty levels – attempt to measure the living standards of an individual as determined by household income. But this assumes that both partners in a couple benefit equally from that income, an assumption that fails to take into account the evidence that, in practice, men tend to control more household resources than women. In other words, HBAI statistics may obscure and/or overestimate the position of women relative to men.

Where gender differences have been identified, a common response among policy-makers is to develop separate policy strands aimed at men and women. There may be circumstances where a focus on one gender is justified; for example, some specific aspects of men's health may lend themselves to this approach.⁶⁴⁰ But there is a significant risk in establishing parallel policy streams that the impact of policies on relations *between* men and women are ignored. For example, developing policy initiatives geared at increasing fathers' involvement with children should consider carefully the implications for mothers, the complexity of family dynamics and how to engage effectively with violent men. Alongside strategies to improve 'girls' education', it is not enough simply to add 'boys' education' strategies; this approach simplifies the issues at stake (see section on 'Education', page 105).

Organisational support

Businesses, public sector organisations, trade unions, sports and community organisations can play a significant role in advancing or impeding progress towards gender equality (see also section on 'Work', page 45). Although there are differences between these kinds of organisations, they are all potentially arenas of gender change. However, shifts in organisational gender regimes are uneven, and are affected by other aspects of organisational restructuring, such as moves towards 'flat structures', new working processes and the amalgamation of different occupational categories.⁶⁴¹

These trends may undermine the potential of organisations as sites where gender equality principles can be furthered. Nevertheless, there are still various ways in which organisations can contribute. They can act as model employers, fostering a supportive institutional culture; for instance they can address the entrenched 'long hours' culture and make it acceptable for men and women to take leave or work flexible hours without fearing that they may be regarded as less committed to their work than other employees. They can also pursue fair employment practices and equal pay, and take action to tackle discrimination. Institutional policies should, for example, go beyond the statutory minimum and include generous paternity and parental leave, flexible working arrangements and anti-bullying, anti-violence and harassment policies.⁶⁴² Opportunities for training on equalities issues

639. Edwards J., *Screening out men*, in Popay J., Hearn J., Edwards J. (eds.) (1998) *Men, Gender Divisions and Welfare*, London: Routledge

640. Recent examples are the development of policies targeted at men in relation to chlamydia screening and suicide prevention.

641. Connell R. (2006) *The Experience of Gender Change in Public Sector Organisations*, *Gender, Work and Organisation*, Vol.13, No.5

642. Hearn J., Parkin W. (2001) *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Organisations*, London: SAGE

and for personal counselling can also be put in place. Another important consideration in moving forward gender equality strategies in organisations is how to involve men in powerful positions in the process of change.

Media representation

Media representations of men and masculinity influence men's understandings of what being a man is about, and help to establish the parameters for debate about public policy. Top-selling magazines and popular self-help books – and to a lesser, but significant extent, TV shows and films – are full of information about masculinity today.⁶⁴³

The example of the rapid rise of 'men's magazines' in the UK in the 1990s, such as *Arena*, *Loaded*, *FHM* and *Maxim*, is well-known. Whilst there are significant differences between these publications,⁶⁴⁴ in general their 'laddish' depiction of heterosexual masculinity is of '*playfulness, flight from responsibility, detached and uninhibited pleasure-seeking and the consumption of women's bodies*'.⁶⁴⁵ Moreover, women tend to be presented, through a plethora of soft porn images, as sexual objects. Although most men's titles are experiencing a sharply declining circulation, worryingly '*many of their readers are migrating to more troubling forms of media – specifically, internet porn, which can obviously go much, much further than these magazines could ever dare*'.⁶⁴⁶

The dramatic expansion of popular psychology and self-help books during this period has also provided a new source of information, primarily aimed at women but also sometimes at men, about relationships and self-identity. The most widely read – such as *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*⁶⁴⁷ – tend, however, to rest on superficial myths about men's and women's 'innate' communication abilities and to reassert sex stereotypes from the 1950s. Given the apparent gulf between men and women, such texts suggest that all that can be done is to accept their separate but complementary natures. Having said this, Gauntlett argues⁶⁴⁸ there are other self-help books for men that share more positive messages: they accept that men can change, that they can express more vulnerable and loving feelings, that they place too much emphasis on work at the expense of personal life and that their needs are remarkably similar to those of women.

Essentialist notions of what men and women are like are also central to advertising.⁶⁴⁹ Although some adverts portray gender reversals (e.g. women in management positions), over the past decade most have reassured viewers that traditional gender relations remain unchanged; for example, where men are portrayed in domestic roles (e.g. in the kitchen), they are often ridiculed for their supposed incompetence. Other adverts perpetuate the notion of a 'sex war'; whilst threatened or implied violence against women in adverts has been a theme for some time, a more recent strand has depicted men as the victims of (female) violence and revenge. An underlying emerging trend has been the encroachment of, and borrowing from, pornographic imagery and idioms.

Mobilising men

There is wide diversity within the overall label of 'men's movements', including groups with very different political agendas⁶⁵⁰ – and often considerable tensions between groups. In the UK, Collier

643. Gauntlett D. (2002) *Media, Gender and Identity*, London: Routledge

644. For further analysis, see Jackson P., Stevenson N., Brooks K. (2001) *Making Sense of Men's Magazines*, Cambridge: Polity

645. Gill R. (2007) *Gender and the media*, Cambridge: Polity

646. Cochrane C., *The dark world of lad's mags*, New Statesman, 23 August 2007

647. Gray J. (1992) *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, New York: Harper Collins

648. Gauntlett D. (ibid.)

649. Gill R. (ibid.)

650. These include: 'men's rights' groups that see men as having 'lost out' to women; 'mythopoetic' men's groups exploring spiritual growth; and various groups with profeminist approaches, and gay and/or black membership. For more detail on these categorisations, see Clatterbaugh K. (1997) *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press

and Sheldon⁶⁵¹ have traced the evolution of various 'fathers' rights' groups, highlighting a shift from concerns around property and finance in the 1970s and early 1980s to, by the late 1990s, a growing focus on child contact and residence arrangements (in addition to financial issues and the Child Support Agency). Some of these groups provide an important and largely invisible advice and support service for non-resident parents alongside policy and campaigning activity; others are openly hostile to women and mothers and have focused largely on highly visible and combative protest actions.

Increasingly, claims by men's and fathers' rights groups of the need for equal treatment have been bolstered by reliance on emerging 'rights' discourses within policy debates. However, these claims have often been undermined by misrepresentation of the continuing evidence that women still suffer far deeper gender inequalities overall, and poorly supported arguments that men and boys are now 'losing out' to women and girls.

From a very different standpoint, other men – both individuals and groups – are willing to demonstrate support for gender equality and more positive forms of masculinity, both in their personal lives and through organised activism. Probably the most obvious example is that of gay men coming together during the 1980s and 1990s in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic – pioneering new approaches to caring for the sick and developing education campaigns on safe sex – and demonstrating in the process new ways for men to work with and care for each other.

The establishment in Britain of the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC), an international campaign which seeks to mobilise men against men's violence, shows that there is potential to develop this kind of action in Britain too. An important feature of the WRC has been the establishment of links with women's organisations and the development of joint initiatives (see section on 'Violence', page 123).

There are also an increasing number of fathers and male carers engaged with early years and other children's services. This development has emerged largely independently of the fathers' rights movement. It represents a new form of mobilisation, with men taking on an actively involved caring role in their children's lives, supported by services traditionally aimed at women. This also offers great potential for joint initiatives involving women and men.

General recommendations

Below, we set out our general recommendations. These are developed in the following categories: developing the policy framework; building institutional mechanisms; monitoring progress; involving men; sharing good practice in working with men and boys; improving data collection; furthering the research agenda; increasing funding; and media representation.

For additional recommendations in relation to specific policy areas, see sections on 'Work' (page 45), 'Fatherhood' (page 65), 'Health' (page 83), 'Education' (page 105) and 'Violence' (page 123).

Developing the policy framework⁶⁵²

Men and boys should be addressed explicitly across government policies, programmes, and performance frameworks, rather than their presence being left implicit. There should be a particular focus on addressing men and masculinities in relation to policies on work, fatherhood, health, education and violence, and to the priorities of the Ministers for Women. The aim should be to 'join up' policies and programmes by focusing on the relations between groups and integrating ('mainstreaming') gender concerns, rather than targeting parallel strategies at women and men separately.

651. Collier R., Sheldon S. (2008) *Fragmenting Fatherhood: A Socio-Legal Study*, Oxford: Hart Publications

652. This section draws extensively upon the framework set out in Connell R. (2003) *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality*, UN Expert Group Meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, 21-24 October 2003

The Government should promote a clear public statement on why men and boys should be involved in gender equality strategies. It is essential to define 'gender' as men's concern as well as women's, to articulate reasons for men and boys to support gender equality and to disseminate this statement widely.

In line with the Gender Equality Duty, policy and programmes should address the specific needs of men and boys where they differ from the needs of women and girls. There may be circumstances where gender analysis leads to the conclusion that specific action orientated at women or men is necessary. The Equality and Human Rights Commission should monitor and enforce compliance with the Duty rigorously, holding public authorities to account.

In designing an appropriate policy framework, central and local government, and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. business, trade unions, NGOs) should build upon the conclusions of the 2006 EU Council on 'Men and Gender Equality' and of the 2004 UN Commission on the Status of Women on 'the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality'.

Building institutional mechanisms

Gender Equality 'Champions' should be appointed in all government departments to monitor and promote implementation of gender equality strategies, and in particular the Gender Equality Duty. Champions must be at senior level, with sufficient power and resources to enforce their responsibilities, and with clear measures set out for success.

The Government Equalities Office and the Equality and Human Rights Commission should establish designated policy and research positions focusing on how men and boys can contribute to tackling gender and other inequalities.

The Government should explore the establishment of a 'Panel on Men and Boys' to stimulate and lead public debate about the engagement of men and boys with gender issues. The panel should be composed of high-profile men and women with expertise on gender.

Monitoring progress

The development by the Government Equalities Office of a performance framework for equality, and work to improve the available data, should address men and masculinity issues.

The 'Gender Impact Assessments' (GIAs) required by the Gender Equality Duty of the policies, budgets and structures of public bodies should include assessment of their impact on men and boys. New statements of government policy should only be released publicly after an assessment has been undertaken.

The development of equalities objectives in the Public Service Agreements for government departments within the next Comprehensive Spending Review should address men and masculinity issues explicitly.

Involving men

Men with senior positions within government, business, trade unions and NGOs should provide high-profile and proactive support for gender equality measures, and encourage other men to play their part. They should also model good practice for men in organisations, working collaboratively with and supporting female colleagues on gender issues.

Achieving progress towards gender equality requires more than working with men as isolated individuals; the development of men's groups and networks committed to advocacy for gender

equality should be encouraged at community level. At local level, these organisations have a potentially important role as stakeholders to be consulted as part of Gender Equality Duty compliance.

Men's and women's groups should establish regular contact and exchange of ideas and practice, and should seek to work in alliance for gender equality as far as possible.

Sharing good practice in working with men and boys

There is a need to undertake a further study to establish clear criteria for identifying effective practice in working with men and boys and examples of this in different policy areas (drawing both from UK and international experience). Key issues are likely to include: frameworks for thinking about men, masculinities and gender; strategies for reaching and engaging men and boys; the role of 'transitions' in the lives of men and boys; co-working between men and women; integrated working between adults' and children's services; professional attitudes; and the evaluation of programmes.

The Government Equalities Office (GEO) should play a lead role in disseminating good practice in engaging men and boys in gender equality work, through events for key stakeholders, in conjunction with national organisations representing and working with men who have a commitment to gender equality. The GEO website also provides an appropriate vehicle for disseminating information to researchers and policy-makers.

Greater efforts should be made both at national and local levels to encourage cross-sectoral links and sharing of good practice between those working with men. This should include a stronger lead from government, more innovative approaches to funding partnerships bringing together different sectors and the development of joint training and support networks between local projects. The Coalition on Men and Boys can act as a catalyst and forum for such discussion.

There is a need for educational institutions to increase training opportunities for professionals (including teachers, social workers, youth workers, counsellors, health workers) to develop their understanding of issues relating to men and masculinities and to improve their practice.

Improving data collection

In order to fulfil the Gender Equality Duty, official statistics should be routinely disaggregated by gender. Whilst the provision of such statistics has improved since the late 1990s, gaps remain which should be addressed,⁶⁵³ e.g. in relation to the staffing of public bodies, access to services and the intersection of social disadvantage and gender (in particular disability, sexuality, age and men's violence to children).

There is a need to develop more studies that integrate attention to the problems men create with attention to the problems men experience, and to broaden official data collection with regard to the relationship between gender and other equalities issues (e.g. age, disability, sexuality).

The general lack of statistics on gender issues in Wales should be remedied by the Office for National Statistics.

Furthering the research agenda

The development of policy towards men and boys should draw more extensively on the substantial body of academic research which now exists, both in the UK and in Europe. As part of its research programme, the Government Equalities Office should maintain a continuing focus on issues and trends in relation to masculinities, and their relationship with and impact on policy development.

653. Breitenbach E. (2006) *Gender Statistics: an evaluation*, Manchester: Equal Opportunities Commission/University of Edinburgh

Further research is required to explore the intersection of masculinities with other equalities strands, such as race, faith, sexuality, age, disability and class. This could be initiated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Government Equalities Office.

The connections between masculinity and disadvantage for particular groups of men and boys have received little research consideration so far (e.g. older men, male migrants and refugees, homeless men, disabled men and boys). Further attention should be directed at their circumstances.

Research is necessary to map both mainstream and specialist services working with men across a range of sectors, to improve the number and quality of external evaluations of project work, and to explore and disseminate good practice in working with men (and in working with men and women together).

Proposed research by the Government Equalities Office into how policy levers can address inequality should explore the dynamics by which some men come to a position of challenging sexism and gender inequality. In order to promote more widely among men positive attitudes and actions towards equality, it is essential to understand the factors that can influence them to adopt these approaches, and how the underlying processes work.

The impact of the different cultural contexts in Wales⁶⁵⁴ and England (and Scotland and Northern Ireland) on the development of masculinities has received little research attention, and should be addressed.

Increasing funding

Policy-makers and funders should seek to devote increased resources to innovative projects working with men and boys, in particular those which are seeking to address masculinity issues from a critical perspective. These may include father-inclusive children's services, anti-violence initiatives, health programmes and education programmes in schools. This support should not be at the expense of vital projects to support women and girls, such as refuges and rape crisis centres.

It is essential to raise the profile of work on gender, and in particular to increase the gender awareness of those in leadership positions (and especially men) who control resources which could be devoted to gender work; this should lead to an expansion in the level of funding available overall. Good practice should be promoted, modelled and disseminated by 'Gender Champions' within government departments.

Improving media representation

Given the power of the media to foster restrictive representations of masculinity (and femininity), it is important to develop strategies in response. Educational initiatives in to assist viewers to analyse media content critically – and in particular the portrayal of gender – should be significantly expanded.

Research should be initiated into the representation of men in the media (including newspapers, photographs, adverts etc.). This should analyse patterns of representation and the discourses that lie behind them, and make recommendations as to how the current limited range of representations of masculinities can be developed and extended.

There is potential for the development of communication and social marketing campaigns aimed at men and boys. There are examples of campaigns producing positive changes in attitudes and behaviours in relation to addressing violence against women and girls.⁶⁵⁵

654. The only specific work we have encountered on Welsh masculinities, for example, is Scourfield J., Drakeford M. (1999) *Boys from Nowhere: Finding Welsh men and putting them in their place*, Contemporary Wales, vol. 12

655. Flood M., *Involving Men in Efforts to End Violence Against Women*, presentation at Domestic Violence Network Forum (Eastern Suburbs Domestic Violence Network), Sydney, 18 March 2008

Media organisations should adopt, implement and monitor editorial guidelines and policies aimed at achieving gender balance in all aspects of their output. This should include revealing and discussing the position and circumstances of men and boys, rather than treating them as the norm.

Entry-level training for journalists should address gender issues, and awareness-raising workshops should be organised for practising journalists, with the aim of drawing attention to the impact of gender on journalistic choices and decisions.