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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Dame Gillian Morgan DBE  
Permanent Secretary  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff  
CF10 3NQ

2 October 2009

Dear Gill

I am writing to you in relation to an issue raised in a letter received by the Authority from PARITY, a voluntary organisation concerned with the equal rights of men and women.

PARITY has drawn the Authority's attention to the fact that on Page 2 of the Introduction to the Strategic Action Plan to Address Violence to Women and to update the Welsh Assembly Government's Domestic Abuse Strategy, the Welsh Assembly Government has asserted that "However, we also recognise that women are overwhelmingly the victims of violence in the home and often fear for their safety whilst out in their communities". PARITY argues that this assertion is at variance with the results of Home Office studies of intimate and interpersonal violence in England and Wales and thus is a misrepresentation of the statistics that exist on the subject of domestic violence.

The Statistics Authority's Monitoring and Assessment Team has looked into this point and their observations are set out in the enclosed note.

I hope these observations are helpful in clarifying the point at issue. It appears from the enclosed note that whilst the statistical evidence does point to a majority of victims being women, the term 'overwhelmingly the victims' is not justified in this context.

I am copying this letter to PARITY.

Yours sincerely



**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

## Note by the UK Statistics Authority

These observations are based on PARITY's letter dated 18th September 2009 to the Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, the Introduction to the Strategic Action Plan to Address Violence to Women and to update the Welsh Assembly Government's Domestic Abuse Strategy, and an analysis of official statistics on the subject of domestic violence.

PARITY have expressed their concern over the use of the term 'overwhelmingly' in the following sentence *'However, we also recognise that women are overwhelmingly the victims of violence in the home and often fear for their safety whilst out in their communities.'* Statistics from the 2007/08 BCS interpersonal module indicate that 23 per cent of women have experienced some form of sexual assault since the age of 16. The BCS statistics also show that women are the victims in the majority of reported violence incidents and this is borne out by the pattern of calls to the Welsh Domestic Abuse Helpline'. The statement in italics appears to be inconsistent with the evidence of which we are aware on the gender split of victims of domestic violence.

The confusion may have arisen when considering the figures relating to domestic abuse and sexual assault, as the gender balance of each of these two categories of abuse is distinct. For example, within the Home Office Statistical Bulletin: Homicides, Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2007/08<sup>2</sup>, Table 3.04, deals with the estimated numbers of male and female victims aged 16 to 59, during 2007/08 in England and Wales. This table shows that for most categories of intimate violence, while the majority of victims were women, this majority was slight, rather than 'overwhelming':

- For the category 'Any domestic abuse', of the total 1,688,000 estimated victims, 727,000 (i.e. 43%) were male.
- For the category 'Any partner abuse', of the total 1,412,000 victims, 641,000 (i.e. 45%) were male.
- For the category 'Any family abuse', of the total 524,000 victims, 198,000 (i.e. 38%) were male.

In contrast, figures for 'Any sexual abuse' show a different pattern by gender:

- For the category 'Any sexual assault', of the total 543,000 estimated victims, 61,000 (i.e. 11%) were male.

The evidence given to support the statement that "women are overwhelmingly the victims of violence in the home" does not accurately reflect the pattern of domestic violence by gender. Although reference to source material has been included within the Welsh Assembly Government consultation document, it should be used in a clearer way so as to avoid misinterpretation of the assertions made.