

[00:00:00.060] - Marsha Scott

The first two weeks after lockdown, in fact, calls to helplines in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland had dropped, and that's because it's women's lives. You know, women's lives, so women are living with domestic abuse, are also having to find loo paper and trying to figure out what to do with these children who are not in school and trying to figure out how to manage to deliver their work from home if they if they can be. All of the things that women manage disproportionately in families and in their lives, and women who are experiencing and living with domestic abuse are no different.

[00:00:36.330] - Marsha Scott

So what we knew was that those first couple of weeks, they were highly unlikely to be calling a helpline if they could find a safe time and place to do it.

[00:00:55.910] - VO

On The Engender, Scotland's feminist policy podcast.

[00:01:04.090] - Alys Mumford

Hello, and welcome to On The Engender, Scotland's feminist policy podcast. Today, we're going to be talking about the Covid-19 pandemic and the reporting of domestic abuse. And we're joined by a fantastic panel. We have Marsha Scott, who's the CEO of Scottish Women's Aid. Hi Marsha.

[00:01:18.020] - Marsha Scott

Hello.

[00:01:19.130] - Alys Mumford

We have a Saffron Roberts, who is Zero Tolerance's Project Support Intern. Hi Saffron.

[00:01:24.990] - Saffron Roberts

Hiya.

[00:01:24.990] - Alys Mumford

And we have Professor Karen Boyle, the professor of Media Studies at the University of Strathclyde. Hi, Karen.

[00:01:30.290] - Karen Boyle

Hi, Alys.

[00:01:31.250] - Alys Mumford

We're going to be focusing today on the reporting of domestic abuse during the Covid-19 crisis. But before we get into all of that, Marsha, could you just give us some background context about what we mean when we talk about domestic abuse in Scotland?

[00:01:42.800] - Marsha Scott

Well, we have the world's gold standard new law on domestic abuse, which covers a host of different forms of abuse. But I think the critical point for this discussion is that domestic abuse in Scotland is a liberty crime. And it's about removing choices and human rights from children and women living with their abusers, but also not living with their abusers. It includes coercive control, so psychological, financial abuse, sometimes involves physical abuse, but doesn't necessarily to still be against the law. It's a pattern of behaviour.

[00:02:26.630] - Marsha Scott

It's not an incident. It's not caused by alcohol, not caused by Covid. It's not caused by stress. It's not caused by unemployment. It's caused by the historical inequality that women have experienced for centuries.

[00:02:42.660] - Alys Mumford

Thanks for that Marsha. So, Karen as we look at the media, so news media, perhaps more widely, it's fair to say that violence against women is one of the key areas that there has been a lot of focus on.

From Zero Tolerance's 'Write to End Violence Against Women Awards', to boycotts of papers who have sensationalised domestic homicide. Can you just run us through what the link is between the media and Violence Against Women?

[00:03:04.190] - Karen Boyle

Yeah, I mean, I think the first thing to say is it's not a simple cause and effect relationship. We're not saying the media is causing the problem. I think that's really important to say. Because the media reflects the world, but it does also influence it. So, we're certainly not saying the media has no influence. The way I always like to think of this is, that representation doesn't always follow on from changes in reality, it can also lead the way.

[00:03:28.100] - Karen Boyle

So in a way, trying to put a more positive spin on it and think about how the media can, if reporting responsibly, be used to actually further women's equality rather than perpetuate inequality. And I think when it comes to domestic abuse, one of the key challenges, if we think for a moment just about news reporting, is that the very everyday nature of domestic abuse, which Marsha has just highlighted, means that it kind of it doesn't necessarily appear as newsworthy.

[00:04:02.150] - Karen Boyle

So newsworthiness is about things that are unusual, that are out of the ordinary in some way. So those cases which are reported on are often those which have an additional sensational element. So those that result in trials, for instance, criminal trials where there's a domestic homicide or a murder suicide or for instance, where a celebrity is involved. And those stories are often not the most representative of the more day-to-day experiences. So that's one tension. And if you look at that sensationalist reporting, you see some of the same challenges you do in many other areas of reporting men's violence.

[00:04:45.250] - Karen Boyle

So violence is minimised, or if it's not minimised, the man is simply seen as a monster, rather than as a man making choices and using violence. I mean, as Marsha was saying, there really, in a way to achieve particular goals often. And victims, and they are very rarely portrayed as survivors I'd say, are either completely vulnerable, passive innocence, or that in some way to blame for what happened for the man's violence. So we still have that kind of dichotomy really, in the way that women are portrayed.

[00:05:21.910] - Karen Boyle

I mean, one thing I think is quite interesting is that in Scotland, I'd say a lot of the best reporting on domestic abuse is not news, but it's feature writing, it's opinion writing. And if you think about the media landscape more widely, I think it's probably fair to say that fictional forms often deal with domestic abuse better than news reporting can. And one area where that's happened a lot over the years is in soap opera, for instance. And in some ways, the fact that soap opera, were dropping in to see these characters three times a week or twice a week or whatever it is, it means these stories can unfold over weeks, months, years.

[00:06:03.190] - Karen Boyle

So it's not that same kind of pressure of the sensationalist moment. Which I think is really important, that said, of course, most of the stories seem to end with some kind of sensationalist element, like we've just seen in EastEnders, for instance. Having said that, that's also led to really good news reporting on the issue, because I think some of the best news reporting in recent years has been reporting on fictional television, so it actually uses that to open up a space to talk about these issues differently. So I think there's real potential there as well as real limitations.

[00:06:39.090] - Alys Mumford

I think that's really interesting, and we talk quite a lot in this context about the "perfect victim", in quotes, that the media often want, and that contributes to lots of these myths around domestic abuse. But actually with soap operas, it's not necessarily that they are portraying that, again quote "perfect victim", but that there is the space, as you say, Karen, there's the relationship to build up the

nuance of the story, which is so often lost. Marsha, do you want to come in there?

[00:07:06.450] - Marsha Scott

Yeah, there's so many things, Karen, that you've said that have really resonated with me. In our experience really, women can both be blamed and be seen as weak and lacking all agency. It's remarkable to me the creativity with which our culture and not just the media, finds ways to blame women for the actions of their abusers and children, too.

[00:07:34.050] - Marsha Scott

However, what I would say is that there have been some really remarkably good, in our experience, series. So, The Archers was pretty good, and the EastEnders story. But I just want to point out that Women's Aid Federation England were very involved in the development of the plot and of the writing for the EastEnders show. And survivors' words were practically taken from focus groups and put in to that show. So, and for me, it's a really good illustration of A) how how do you do good theatre? But also of the importance of authentic information going into the development of whether it's fiction or non-fiction.

[00:08:21.690] - Marsha Scott

And and so rarely do soundbite treatments of domestic abuse allow for that. And so what happens then is that people default to what are really myths about domestic abuse. So, and we saw that so clearly in the Covid reporting. So we went from somewhat nuanced reporting, that had grown out, I think, out of the really healthy debate about the new domestic abuse law and so on. And we immediately defaulted and saw people talking about domestic abuse that was being caused because people were shut up in a flat together.

[00:09:01.260] - Alys Mumford

So, yeah, that's a really, really good point and leads me onto chatting to Saffron. Welcome Saffron, this is your first time on the On The Engender podcast. Saffron's worked with Zero Tolerance this year to do some analysis of the media coverage of violence against women during the pandemic. So Saffron, can you just tell us why you, and why Zero Tolerance, undertook this work in the first place?

[00:09:22.900] - Saffron Roberts

So it was part of an annual Zero Tolerance project where we do a week of media monitoring to identify issues we need to address, to improve reporting on violence against women and to monitor progress and see whose voices are missing, whose are there. And so this is part of our prevention work to change social attitudes around violence against women. But this year was obviously really different due to the pandemic dominating the news, and also because I couldn't go out and buy physical copies of the newspapers.

[00:09:49.410] - Saffron Roberts

So during the very first week of lockdown in March, I checked 10 newspapers websites for 7 days, and I used 15 different terms that were related to violence against women to produce like a limited snapshot of the kinds of things that were being reported on. And it was obviously very limited because I only used 15 search terms, which made it impossible to make sure we captured everything. Because obviously often there's reporting on violence against women, that doesn't explicitly identify itself as being about violence against women.

[00:10:17.760] - Saffron Roberts

So, obviously we miss those things, but we got as much as we could without having real newspapers.

[00:10:24.900] - Alys Mumford

So you talked there that some of it was limited, but you did find out some really interesting stuff. So can you just yeah, what were your key findings through that project?

[00:10:31.860] - Saffron Roberts

Yes, so we had, I guess, three main points. Firstly, so towards the end of the week that I was monitoring, six out of the ten major newspapers I was looking at had acknowledged the links between

the lockdown and potential increases in domestic abuse and other forms of violence against women. But none of these appeared on the websites', kind of, front pages. But it did mean that there was more reporting on general trends of domestic abuse as opposed to just individual cases, which had been the case in previous years of monitoring.

[00:11:02.130] - Saffron Roberts

And so, the increase in reporting on different forms of violence was from 15% in 2019, to 32% on different forms of violence this year.

[00:11:11.710] - Saffron Roberts

So, because it was talking about there were a few articles that were generally: we're going to see increased levels of domestic abuse. There were a couple of articles that said: this will not just be physical, it's to do with coercive control. I think there was a couple about pornography and the ways that there'd been increases in people uploading pornography to websites without permission. So like revenge porn. And also there was one to do with trafficking as well. So there was a wider range than there normally is, but it was still very focused.

[00:11:44.640] - Saffron Roberts

But there was this year, I think, to do with the fact that there was more awareness of the general increase that we were going to see, there was more helplines on the different articles. So which was probably just to do the creation of the English Women's Aid call out that there'd been. And also because these articles were online. So you were more able to have like hyperlinks to websites, and things like that. Because in 2018 and 2019, our media monitoring had, we had, zero helplines that we'd found. Whereas this year there were 19% that featured helplines, which was a real improvement. But in terms of language and narratives, even though there was a slight change in the types of violence that were being reported on, it was still very consistent, in terms of previous years. Like Karen had said earlier, the idea of the monster. I think they used the word beast to Harvey Weinstein and Epstein as well. And there was also an article that used some perpetrated justifications of how they did it. And obviously they didn't align their reporting with these justifications. But even the fact that one article had talked about a group of workers who have tied a female colleague to a chair and abused her, and the article quoted their argument that said: they were all involved in workplace hijinks.

[00:13:00.990] - Saffron Roberts

And even though this isn't an article saying that, for there to be reporting using that justification, that kind of linguistically defends perpetrators as playing like boisterous games or as being being animalistic. Which then doesn't represent them as just normal men perpetrating abuse, but as this kind of mitigating circumstances, which doesn't help the narrative because we want people to see that domestic abuse is part of gender inequality. But instead, these narratives make it look like it's just random events happen in circumstances that aren't normal.

[00:13:36.030] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, for sure. And one thing I'm interested to sort of dig into a little bit there, Marsha and Karen do come in on this, that the media sometimes seems like it might be in a bit of a bind. Like as Karen said, the media needs something new to sort of sell, sell the papers, and something as pervasive and everyday as domestic abuse often doesn't get the coverage, but we're - Marsha, you were very clear at the start that Covid-19 doesn't cause domestic abuse. But at the same time, there is this reporting of increased calls to helplines, these sorts of things. So where is that disconnect happening? And is there a link between the Covid-19 pandemic and violence against women?

[00:14:15.580] - Marsha Scott

Well, there is a link and it's not at all unhelpful to have a focus on how something like a global pandemic will impact on what is probably the largest violation of, human rights violation of, women's and children's lives. So, it is really helpful, part of the difficulty, however, has been - and there was something very new to report, obviously - but the difficulty, I suppose, is because so much of it is often based on a really shallow, at best, understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse.

[00:14:56.670] - Marsha Scott

So, again, the notion that somehow domestic abuse suddenly will get worse and that we'll be able to measure that by calls to a national helpline. And the reason that I think of the reporting, so much of the reporting, took that path. I suppose there's two reasons. One is that a charity in England called Refuge released a press release. Now it's not Women's Aid England. And they, they're not even national in England. But they released a press release saying that their calls to their helpline were, something like, up 150% or something like that. Which was not representative of any of the other helplines in the UK, can I say, or in Ireland. Because we all knew what was happening, which is that - and we discovered this in our data - that there needed to be a pause for some data to approve.

[00:15:56.340] - Marsha Scott

But we discovered that what was happening, in the first two weeks after lockdown. In fact calls to the helplines in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland had dropped, and that's because it's women's lives, women's lives, women are living with domestic abuse, are also having to find loo paper and kind of figure out what to do with these children who are not in school. And trying to figure out how to manage to deliver their work from home if they can be, and how to apply for furlough money. And all of the things that women manage disproportionately in families and in their lives.

[00:16:34.870] - Marsha Scott

And women who are experiencing and living with domestic abuse are no different. So what we knew was that those first couple of weeks, they were highly unlikely to be calling a helpline if they could find a safe time and place to do it. And it was only after some of the new issues that had been solved that they were going to begin to problem solve. So we had women calling us from when they were walking the dog. We had a hugely increased use of web chat because we know you don't have to worry about being overheard.

[00:17:09.220] - Marsha Scott

You could be sitting and watching television and looking like you're texting a friend, blah, blah, blah. So but the reality is all of those things were immediately obvious to us because we all understand the realities of women's lives and of children's lives. And and if there were some way that we could move, and I think the Zero Tolerance guidance is really helpful for this, if we could move the reporting so that it just, goes from a higher bar, higher understanding or set of assumptions.

[00:17:39.700] - Marsha Scott

And then, of course, there was the problem of people conflating calls to the helpline with changes in the prevalence of domestic abuse. And our theory at the time, which is also been borne out by data, is that in fact lockdown was likely to give abusers more tools for controlling women and children. So telling them the police were going to bring them back if they tried to flee, that kind of thing. But that it was highly, it wasn't going to turn a man who wasn't an abuser into an abuser. So it wasn't going to increase the prevalence, was just going to make what was existing more likely to be more severe.

[00:18:20.790] - Karen Boyle

I think I'd add to that as well, Alys. That I think that's such an important point about an increase in calls to helplines doesn't mean an increase in prevalence. But I think the other thing that often gets sort of folded into the media narrative around this, is that a media story in itself can produce an increase in calls to helplines and that's something that's quite complicated to understand, it's not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, we could see it as a very positive thing. That's responsible media reporting, which provides links to helplines as Saffron has suggested could actually make it easier for women to recognise their own experiences and to seek help as a result. So, I think things like increasing calls to helplines, we need to think about the many different things that that means. It's not a single measure, as I think Marsha was also agreeing, in terms of scepticism about Refuge's use of that statistic in quite a blunt way.

[00:19:25.600] - Marsha Scott

I totally agree, and I think it's been so useful that Zero Tolerance has put out as sort of one of the good standards of good practice that media sources cite helplines. Part of our problem, of course, is then that they cite the wrong ones often. So in Scotland, they will cite a helpline in England. However,

it is helpful in general and we will get there, I think eventually, with people citing the right ones.

[00:19:56.230] - Marsha Scott

I have really noticed, because I do as you would imagine, quite a lot of radio and television interviews and did lots during the first weeks after Covid. And I am sensing that there is less reluctance to run our helpline number, like in a banner underneath the interview or as part of a radio interview, than there was a year ago. A year ago, I would get people from the BBC or other places saying, oh, well, we don't do that. And I almost never get that now.

[00:20:28.930] - Alys Mumford

And that's quite interesting because Karen, so we recorded a podcast looking at sexual assault trials a few months ago and we were talking about the difficulty of actually getting those helpline numbers in. Is that just a change in situation, is that?

[00:20:42.400] - Karen Boyle

I think it's about different attitudes to different forms of abuse as well as changing situations. My understanding and Saffron may be able to come in on this as well, but my understanding is we've not seen the same upswing in the use of helplines in reporting on rape and sexual assault during lockdown, as we have the upswing in reporting on domestic abuse being accompanied by helplines. And I think that's for a few reasons. I think one of the reasons is that so much reporting on rape and sexual assault hinges on criminal trials. And so there is an anxiety about using helpline information, and that being seen as in some way biasing the story. Which I think is something we need to unpick anyway.

[00:21:34.030] - Karen Boyle

You know, what that's acknowledging is that there are survivors in the audience, it's not making a judgement about the story itself. I don't think there's the same reluctance on domestic abuse, maybe for two reasons. One is that partly because of the debate, the very public debate, about coercive control in Scotland. There has over the last few years been media reporting that's on domestic abuse as a phenomenon rather than one individual's experience. And that makes it easier to use helplines.

[00:22:09.790] - Karen Boyle

So a lot of the Covid reporting was around, is there an increase at the moment? So if you like, they were kind of they weren't about did this person abuse that person? And so it made it easier to run the helpline. That's one part of it, I think. And I think the second thing was probably that in the context of the Covid reporting, there was a particular emphasis on domestic homicide. And in cases of homicides, it is understood that there is a victim in a way that it's not understood in report's standard and reporting of sexual assault.

[00:22:49.500] - Karen Boyle

So in some ways, it's made it easier for news organisations to provide that support and guidance without anxiety that they would be seen as prejudicing. The understanding of an individual case. Just to be honest, I don't think that the idea that running a helpline prejudices a story, I don't think that's legitimate. I think is about saying, look who's reading this? And what our readers need to know? It's not about what do we think about the story. You know, if the story is about domestic abuse, then it is helpful to say domestic abuse exists. And here's where there's support.

[00:23:30.460] - Alys Mumford

Great yeah, that's really, really interesting points. And I think one thing when we dig into the research you were doing with Zero Tolerance, it's yeah, there are some, I guess, muted positives, like you said about the increase in helplines. Although, from a completely non-existent dark point, in what woeful lack of helplines in previous years. But it seems like a lot of it is, the same old stuff we've seen before, just with a sort of a Covid twist, if you will. I'm particularly distressed in the report to read about the 'Not 'Appy' headline. Can you just tell us, tell our listeners what that was?

[00:24:04.630] - Saffron Roberts

Yeah, I was also quite distressed reading that, and the headline was, 'NOT SO 'APPY. As millions of

single Brits stay home, women reveal dating app horror stories - from dick pics to 'I'll cook you' threats'. And the headline itself like trivialises the idea of the amount of real distress a death threat obviously causes. The idea that it's like haha, 'I'll cook you' - that is a threat, that's a very real threat that could lead to a very real crime. And to put that in such a snappy title made me very uncomfortable.

[00:24:38.530] - Saffron Roberts

So the article itself had like different women, and it was talking about their experiences on dating apps, and it did have a few statistics. So it said that 88% of women experience harassment on dating apps, and a couple of other bits. But it didn't really address anything about the reality of the abuse that women can suffer or the, like where this comes from, that the roots are in gender inequality. It was more a list of different horrible, it was horror stories.

[00:25:08.320] - Saffron Roberts

It was horror stories of things that have happened to women on dating apps. But the way that the article was framed, made it just - oh listen to these horrible snapshots - as opposed to women are going to be home alone on dating apps. People are going to be using them. Here's where you can get help or here's how you can stay safe. Nothing like that.

[00:25:27.900] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, I think that goes back to something you were chatting about before we pressed record Karen, about the media in general is not good to women, not even just looking at this specific issue. But, you said..

[00:25:38.710] - Karen Boyle

Yeah, there was an earlier point I wanted to come in on just in response to reporting on sexual assault. And yeah, partly it's to refer back to our earlier podcast. So we do deal with that a bit there. And I mean, I must admit, one thing I'd found really surprising when we were doing that work that led up to the sexual assault podcast was I'd assumed that not naming complainants and sexual assault cases was actually law.

[00:26:08.740] - Karen Boyle

And what we were discussing in that podcast with input from Rape Crisis is that in Scotland, it's actually convention, not law. So actually, the protections for survivors are not as robust as we might think they are. I mean, I think everyone sort of said so far that when we're trying to understand domestic abuse, we can't understand domestic abuse without understanding gender inequality. And therefore, if we're trying to understand domestic abuse in the media, we need to understand the broader picture of gender inequality in the media.

[00:26:40.120] - Karen Boyle

And one thing that really struck me on a positive note when Marsha was talking, was the demand for Marsha to speak on radio and television shows that we are looking at women and women's organisations as experts on these stories, to an extent. But I think overall, what's quite galling when you look at big international studies of women in the news, so, such as the Global Media Monitoring Project, and we're currently in the middle of the 2020 project. And what that does is take a snapshot look, at one day's news across the world.

[00:27:17.680] - Karen Boyle

And what that has consistently found is that when we look at all the people in the news, people who are subjects of the news, who are talked about, who are the experts, who are the spokespeople, who are the reporters, who are the journalists, who are the anchors? That consistently women have not been above 24% of people in the news globally. And that's worrying for all kinds of reasons.

[00:27:45.880] - Karen Boyle

But if we think about it in relation to these stories, we've heard a lot so far about the representation of women as victims or maybe even as survivors. But what that means is that those women are bearing a huge burden of representation because they're being asked to represent the issue. We're not looking

at the broader context in which this takes place. And that's where it is encouraging when experts like Marsha are called upon by the news because it enables us to understand the individual story in that broader context, and it enables us to see women taking on those expert roles.

[00:28:23.050] - Karen Boyle

And the final thing I'd say about that is we then need to ask which women are getting those expert roles and which women aren't. And Gender Equal Media Scotland is involved in a project at the moment called Pass the Mic, which is looking at women of colour in the Scottish news. And so we hope to be able to report on our findings on that over the next months.

[00:28:45.130] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, absolutely. And I think it is really nice and important, I think, to acknowledge the positives that there are there. So as you're saying Marsha, you're getting asked on, and Karen highlighted that. And there have been some really good writing all of this, but still a huge amount to be done. And I'm going to sort of bring us to the end of this recording, I think, and look at the future.

[00:29:07.480] - Alys Mumford

Look at where we want to get to. And I'm going back right to the start where, we were talking about the sensationalism aspect of the news, of the bind that lots of news outlets and journalists are in. You know, even if they get it, and want to talk about these things, trying to deal with an editor to actually run the story. That isn't some of the bad examples that Saffron talked about there. So, the hook for a while was Covid, we saw that in Saffron and Zero Tolerance's study there. But it seems increasingly like Covid might just be the background status for us all for a while.

[00:29:39.090] - Alys Mumford

So what are your hopes for the reporting of domestic abuse going forward? What would you like to see, for any journalists or budding journalists out there? For any activists sitting thinking, well, I can at least tweet my local paper if they do something wrong. What should we be seeing?

[00:29:54.180] - Marsha Scott

Well, I think we look at the horizon around what's likely to be in the public narrative. And we see a few things and we see opportunities to invite politicians and parties to sign up to certain standards of how they talk about victims, but also how they fund victim services, and the extent to which they will embed addressing inequality into their decision-making. So you know, the dreaded equality impact assessment. And I think there are all kinds of ways to try and engage, and we will be engaging with the... We are engaging with the political parties around the manifesto stuff. The difficulty, of course, I think for everybody is that the landscape is so unclear about Covid, that it is really, really difficult to know whether - so we launched something that we've been working on for quite a long time.

[00:30:54.210] - Marsha Scott

And then, but it coincided with a new announcement about Covid so it just kind of got washed out of the media stream in some ways. So it's really difficult to plan. But certainly the elections allow us to talk about the disproportionate effect of Covid on women. And what are you going to do about the fact that there are still poor, they have less power. There's a bigger pay gap. The children have less power.

[00:31:23.640] - Marsha Scott

I think also the general issues that have been raised about reframing. Since we've had this incredible pandemic which has stopped life as we knew it and government as we knew it in Scotland, that we have an opportunity rather than just trying to reset to the original setting. But to actually shift our focus and make the new approaches in terms of services and government and media and all of those things, serve a better end. And that end would be, from our perspective, making domestic abuse an old news story by ending women's inequality.

[00:32:05.880] - Alys Mumford

That was a very comprehensive answer to what are your hopes, thanks Marsha. I join you in all of those. Karen, Saffron? Anything you want to bring in on this, something we're looking forward to?



[00:32:19.830] - Karen Boyle

Yeah, I think.. I suppose, I mean there's so much you'd like to see. How can you just pick a few? But just to be as succinct as I can, I think to build on the good work that's been done in sharing helplines, where that work has been done. That would definitely be one thing I'd like to see. I'd also really encourage people who are producing media who are listening or journalism students who are listening to really think about who they use as experts and make use of directories such as that produced by Pass the Mic, to encourage people to look to women of colour as experts, for instance.

[00:32:54.060] - Karen Boyle

And as part of that, I think, think about the way that reporting on other issues can also be reporting about domestic abuse. I think Marsha has already given an example of that in terms of thinking about the election, for instance. But I'd say as well, another example would be thinking about a lot of the good reporting and very, very bad reporting I've seen in recent years has been in entertainment media. That's largely because I've been doing a lot of work on Me Too.

[00:33:24.570] - Karen Boyle

And obviously the entertainment media has been really, a key focus of that reporting. But to take two of the examples that Saffron and I have mentioned in a UK context, the recent BBC EastEnders story or the ITV documentary, Honour, about the murder of Banaz Mahmod. Both of those stories have provided really good opportunities to open up a space for discussion about different forms of men's violence against women. And to bring a different range of experts to the table. And I'm not convinced that they always have brought the experts we need to hear from, but that's the area we still need to work on.

[00:34:09.530] - Alys Mumford

Fantastic, thank you. And Saffron, we'll give the final word to you. What are your hopes for reporting on these issues in future?

[00:34:16.170] - Saffron Roberts

Yeah, I think this very much the same. It's really important to have different voices and different types of violence that are often unseen forms of violence against women that are reported so that they're not unseen anymore, so that we can understand them. The way that the media frame narratives is very important, so when talking about perpetrators, especially as we've seen in recent times when these are really well known people. I think the focus should really be on their abusive actions or alleged abusive actions as opposed to their individual reputations. Whether they're a sports fan or politician is not really the point of the article. The point of their abuse of power is very important, but using language that backs their reputations to aggrandise them, or to language that is sensationalist or humorous or trivializing in any way. These articles should be about focusing on men's active abuse and not on women's passive victim mode.

[00:35:17.890] - Saffron Roberts

And this is something that we emphasise in our Zero Tolerance guidelines on reporting, because the way that narratives are framed in the media is the way most people receive their information about domestic abuse and violence against women more generally. So it's really important for people to see the responsibility that they have in these kinds of reporting, in building social attitudes.

[00:35:39.730] - Alys Mumford

Fantastic, thank you. And we will, of course, link to the Zero Tolerance guide for journalists in the show notes along with the other podcast we've mentioned and lots of other useful resources. Links to the Gender Equal Media Scotland website, links to information about Scottish Women's Aid, Engender, and Zero Tolerance. I'd like to just end by giving the Scottish Helpline, so this is the Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline, which anyone can call it's: 0800 027 1234. And as Marsha mentioned, there's also an online chat function if it's difficult for you to use the phone and that's [sdfmh.org.uk](http://sdfmh.org.uk)

[00:36:24.970] - Amanda Stanley VO

This episode of On The Engender was hosted by Alys Mumford, and featured the voices of Marsha Scott, Saffron Roberts, and Professor Karen Boyle. The episode was made in collaboration with Gender Equal Media Scotland and was produced by Amanda Stanley. The music featured throughout was written and performed by Bossy Love. You can find out more about Gender Equal Media Scotland by heading to their website, [genderequalmedia.scot](http://genderequalmedia.scot) or by following them on Twitter, @EqualMediaScot

[00:36:52.390] - Amanda Stanley VO

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