

[00:00:18.630] - VO

On the Engender Scotland's Feminist Policy podcast.

[00:00:27.270] - Alys Mumford

Hello and welcome to Season Two of On the Engender, Scotland's feminist policy podcast. I'm Alys Mumford, and I'll be bringing you monthly discussions with fantastic guests looking at how we can bring about women's equality in Scotland. In this episode, we'll be sharing a live recording of an event we held with campaigner Luke Hart and journalist Dani Garavelli speaking about responsible reporting of violence against women. First, though, I think it's pretty important to acknowledge that we are living in fairly strange times. The Covid-19 crisis and the resulting public health measures have had and continue to have a profound impact on all of our lives. And we're sending you warm wishes and solidarity in coping with whatever life is throwing at you right now. Covid-19 has shone a light on the inequalities that Engender has been campaigning on for many years. Women's health, of course, but also Social Security, precarious work, violence against women, public space and unpaid care. We'll be talking about all these things and more throughout Season Two of On the Engender. But we'll also be bringing you shorter blasts of news in The Briefing, a fortnightly update on Covid-19 and women's equality in Scotland. The briefing will be coming out on the same channel as On the Engender. So you don't need to do anything new to listen to it. But if there's anything you particularly like us to cover in the series, please do let us know.

[00:01:41.340] - Alys Mumford

Before we delve into this episode, please note that it does contain descriptions of domestic homicide, domestic abuse, including coercive and financial control, and suicide. If you do continue listening, please take care of yourself. This discussion was recorded last year in Edinburgh. Just imagine it, a hundred people actually sitting in the same room, where Engender joined with partners Gender Equal Media, Zero Tolerance and Scottish Women's Aid to hear journalist Dani Garavelli speak with campaigner Luke Hart about his work to encourage responsible reporting of violence against women. Over to Dani.

[00:02:12.500]

[Jingle]

[00:02:23.720] - Dani Garavelli

Thanks so much for giving your time so generously, and I'm sure everyone here appreciates how hard it is for you to tell your story over and over again, but also they will appreciate the importance of the work you're doing. We're going to talk mostly about the media aren't we, but I thought maybe to start to set it in context, you might be willing to talk a little bit about what happened and particularly about the controlling behaviour of your father and how it impacted your family?

[00:02:47.510] - Luke Hart

Yeah, sure. So, for those that don't know my story, effectively, me and my brother were just as shocked as everyone else. So we'd grown up in a little village in Lincolnshire. Nothing untoward seemed to be up with our lives from an external perspective and very much from an internal perspective. Our life seemed to be moving forward, I suppose, although things weren't great at home, we didn't think there was anything dangerous going on. Our father was an angry man. He was a controlling man. But we never realised that he posed any threat to us. But he controlled our lives, particularly financially. So growing up, we didn't have the money to go and see friends and have the money for our mother to leave the house and have coffees. We were constrained by finances is what we always believed to be limiting our lives. And when we were very young, Ryan and I realised and our mother encouraged us to work hard at school and we realised that we had the potential to one day look after our mum and sister and give them a life that they couldn't have under our father.

[00:03:56.030] - Luke Hart

So we went through school, we sailed through school. We were smart kids. We sailed through university, and we got decent jobs. And when I was 26 in 2016, Ryan and I had both saved up enough money to look after our mum and sister. So when our father was at work we managed to get a moving van. We managed to get our mother, who managed to just get like some basic furniture. And

we moved our mother to a house about five miles down the road, and our sister Charlotte was on holiday with her boyfriend. That weekend, Charlotte came back. We both went to work. So I was in Scotland, Ryan was in Holland. And I think it was on the Tuesday that I got a phone call from Ryan originally and he was saying there's been a shooting in Spalding and three people are dead. And that was all there was in the highlights of the BBC News app. And basically that was the unfolding of us learning what domestic abuse was, I suppose, for the first time. And then from that point on, we've been on a journey, I suppose, understanding the abuse that actually was going on the whole time that we never understood, partially because of the reason we're here, because of the messages that we had absorbed from the media, from our culture, we were being abused. Our father was a latent murderer and seriously dangerous our entire lives. And unfortunately, the media coverage that we saw eulogised our father. Many people commended his character and reinforced the entitlement, I suppose that leads these men to do it. And also kind of blinds the victims by giving this skewed victim - the victim blaming narrative and also hiding what domestic abuse really is.

[00:05:32.080] - Dani Garavelli

Could you give us some examples of the worst of what you experienced in terms of newspaper coverage and other media?

[00:05:38.020] - Luke Hart

Yeah, sure. So well, I mean, the first thing that struck us was the news, the news reporting really, was like our father was like Godzilla almost. It was the same perspective coming at us from the media that father always given us. So everything I mean, we even experienced it with our mother's close female friends, they were providing reasons why he did it. They were finding an apparent logic. So people were telling us how hard divorce could be. People were proposing that to us, our mother's friends. Some of our mother's friends asked if she was having an affair, somehow believing that it was an appropriate time to ask the question, it might provide some answers or - it just seemed obscene. And in the newspapers, particularly, locals who knew our father were quoted as saying he was a nice guy, always caring. People commented how good he was at DIY, and one report even said it was understandable. And all the way through there was just like, they were to us. It was almost as if a father had written it. And I think that's what this in the face was, the fact that the abuse that we'd suffered and the murder note that our father left behind wasn't a personal problem contained just to our father. Much of the beliefs that led him to do what he did are woven into our society, to the fact that women would articulate those exact beliefs back at us. Like amongst friends, and the media, would articulate exactly those beliefs and perspectives. And we realised within days that this is something that we have to put our voice to because this isn't going to stop. It seemed that we just saw our life fall apart and then nothing changed and then it sort of just disappeared. And we realised that unless you talk and actually challenge this, then it's a perpetual cycle.

[00:07:31.450] - Dani Garavelli

So you felt powerless in the first - the first few days, and the way it was framed?

[00:07:37.890] - Luke Hart

Yeah powerless, but also incredibly angry. Our mum and sister could just be sort of discarded. And actually, the fact that, like, they had no emotional legitimacy, almost, it seemed a father was a poor man who deserved a huge amount of sympathy because of divorce, as if divorce is anti-male or something. Even our mother was equivalent half of that as well. And everything was from our father's perspective and our father's emotional suffering. There was nothing about the life we'd suffered under him or even our mother's half of divorce. It was just it was just written from a male perspective. And that's entirely the problem, that the male perspective is privileged over females entirely. And we realise that these beliefs are what are responsible. And actually we can't let them go by without challenging them.

[00:08:25.540] - Dani Garavelli

Because it was actually, I think you say in your book don't you, that the implication was that this was a one-off act of violence which was out of character, whereas, you know, from from letters and from plans that he'd made that that potential for violence had been there for a long - for physical violence, I mean, beyond coercive control.

[00:08:44.650] - Luke Hart

Yes so, the police found out that our father was writing murder - basically he was writing drafts of his murder note for - so it was weeks before we planned to leave. So our father had a series of notes that the police went back and looked at and he was rehashing them constantly and trying to find justifications for killing his family over and over again. And it wasn't until we left that he had a motivation that he felt was justifiable, I suppose, that he could propose and the media would run with. And also they looked at his search history. And for months before, he'd been searching for men who kill their family. So we know from our father that what he read very much had an impact on how he behaved, and the fact that our father was given almost like - our father was a nobody and he was given a public funeral. What message does that send to men like, if you're no one, kill your wife and everyone's going to say what a great guy you are on national media for days. Like you couldn't ask for a better funeral and why are we giving it to murderers? I think the media, like, there's kind of just interviewing people and trying to, like, investigate, but then there's just - it's just carelessness. It's not even carelessness, it's dangerousness. And I think that we have a responsibility to understand that these men do this because of what they believe. And the media is part of that belief system and it needs to be really careful about what it says.

[00:10:12.150] - Dani Garavelli

And it's also partly why you didn't recognise the pattern of coercive and controlling, and the media is part of that as well, isn't it? Because that could be highlighted.

[00:10:20.690] - Luke Hart

So our father was never violent, I mean it was - when we were kids we were smacked, but that's not like irregular, I suppose. But as we grew up, he was never violent. So we always looked for violence to indicate when he turned from being nasty to dangerous. So we thought for someone to kill, they have to progress through violence. And we were waiting we were watching, because that was what we were taught it was about. We were taught that domestic violence was about men losing emotional control. So we tried really carefully not to piss him off. So we made ourselves small. We thought, well, if it's emotional, then one day it will get fixed. Maybe it'll just disappear. He can work through whatever. But when you realise that domestic abuse is based on control, and it's intentional, then all of a sudden you realise there's nothing you can do about it. This is so ingrained that it's not worth your time trying to fix it, quite frankly. We would have left if we had of known that was like what leads to murder in this case, we would have left the country, we'd have disappeared. But we didn't realise the danger because we'd always seen the same media reports, everyone else had seen so we were looking for the wrong things.

[00:11:34.980] - Dani Garavelli

Yeah. And could you talk to me a little bit about so the work that you've done since and whether you think that is impacting on the way people are viewing domestic abuse? And also whether other factors are also perhaps bringing people to a more enlightened, let's say, view?

[00:11:50.790] - Luke Hart

Yeah, well I don't know if we're like making - hopefully we're making a difference. I think the main thing is that we're trying to keep talking about control as much as possible. We're trying to make people aware that domestic abuse is intentional as much as we can. So we've been training police officers. We've been training people that hopefully are in the front lines. In the domestic homicide review there was, in our case we'd never met the police because our father wasn't violent. We seemed to be doing well at school and no one ever raised the issue. And we didn't think he was dangerous. But our mother did encounter the GP a lot, with a lot of - my mother had MS. She had a lot of in retrospect, like stress-related illnesses and caused by it, which weren't picked up on, a common like trigger, an indicator of domestic abuse. Our father had all the - our father had the man with depression victim like self pitying profile that is indicative of a man that will kill. And those side by side were entirely missed by the GP. We haven't been able to change GPs because I suppose they're kind of self-employed, they're a hard kind of group to get into. But we have kind of - we have trained with NHS staff because I think most people, I don't think if they're suffering coercive control, will realise. And it's key I think the medical professionals are really, really hot on this stuff because the police, by the time

the police are called, it can often be far too late. But I suppose the control shows the potential like they are willing to control a human being, whereas the abuse, like the physical violence, might well just be a vent, it might just be something that they do.

[00:13:31.410] - Luke Hart

But if they're not controlling every aspect of your life, they might be committing you some aspect that you can live. But our father never let our mother live an inch away from him like he would hunt down into the toilet. He would find out where she was. He would go through every receipt, through her phone. Like he didn't permit our mother an inch to live. And that in itself was indicative. And I think that's what we've tried to teach people, is that you can't look for signs because we as kids didn't show the signs that, you know, an angry, dysfunctional child. Our mother didn't have bruises. Our father wasn't violent. If you look for signs and you don't understand control, that is kind of like playing battleships. I mean, domestic abuse will manifest in so many different ways with so many different people. You have to really imagine the kind of intricacies of how that person's trying to live. So we try and kind of get past the signs and teach people to empathise as much as possible.

[00:14:26.180] - Dani Garavelli

You've had, you've actually had women come to conferences, haven't you, and then tell you afterwards that they recognise maybe signs in their own relationship or - and then retrospectively come back and tell you that they've done something about it. Is that right?

[00:14:39.240] - Luke Hart

Yeah so, I think a lot of people, I mean, a lot of abusers don't consider themselves to be abusers, I think, because they justify their own morals. They kind of - like I know a lot of people who've been with an abuser. Well like our father, we thought it was a thing that he did, but it seems quite common that they will go quiet for a period of time before they'll just come back at you and spew and spew and spew anger for in some cases, days. But they'll always be quiet, for maybe sometimes an hour, sometimes it was like a day. But he would always come back afterwards full of, like, moral righteousness. It was like it seemed totally contradictory, but he would feel like he was so right. And that's, I think, key is that in their minds, what they do is they justify to themselves that what they're about to do is right, that you're wrong, that they have absolutely every right to do this to you. And for us, I suppose we very quickly learned that we were always wrong. And in that environment, it's really hard, like thinking back actually. We as young children internalise most of that actually, and it took - it was until afterwards, really, that we began to unravel our lives, I think. It's amazing the effect it has on you and my mother, I think our mother survived in some sense by learning to ignore parts of it. And I think that's why coercive control is so dangerous, because you have to begin to ignore some of it otherwise, it gets inside your head. And our mother learned to keep some of it away. And I think that's why she never realised how dangerous our father was.

[00:16:06.530] - Dani Garavelli

But people hearing you talk about it can recognise that because some of the things that your father did are probably quite archetypal of like controlling the finances or, you know, that kind of thing.

[00:16:17.990] - Luke Hart

Exactly, and I think like after you've been in coercive control for a while, you do learn - it becomes background noise. You learn to adapt to keep it out of your mind as much as possible. But then that means you don't notice it. And it was only when we spoke that people coming back and saying, wait a second, that sounds so much like what's happening at home. Like he hasn't hit me, hasn't done this, he makes my life miserable, this that and the other. But like our story, I suppose what makes it unique to us and to some people is that our father wasn't violent and actually we'd never seen a case like that to reference and go, wait a second, this person could be really, really dangerous. So I think hearing our story, people have realised that they could be in a lot more danger. And actually, I think if we had that message, it would have maybe kicked us into a different gear. And it seems that talking to some people it has, and that's a good thing. But also it can - leaving is obviously incredibly dangerous, but at least they're informed when they make that decision.

[00:17:12.710] - Dani Garavelli

So what about journalists? I know you've worked with journalists. Are you seeing any receptiveness to the message and a willingness to try and change? And how much of it do you think is deliberate? And I mean, journalists are people as well. So they are kind of entrenched in the same attitudes. It's kind of a vicious circle, isn't it? They're perpetuating the attitudes, but they're also receiving them.

[00:17:29.850] - Luke Hart

Yeah so, when we - it's funny actually because when we started to challenge the media, they all went, yeah, totally. And at each other and we're like, yeah, of course that's right. But they'd all obviously, most of them, had done it wrong in the first place. And I think when we've spoken to journalists, they don't want to do it wrong. It's just that they believe the same stuff that they put out. And like the media, we sometimes think is kind of showing us how things are, but actually it's almost telling us how things should be in a kind of feedback loop. So they believe eventually what they've seen, like you said, just like everybody else. And I think they would like to do it better. But it's I mean, control is something I suppose feminist groups have known lies at the root of domestic abuse for a very long period of time. But it doesn't seem like from our experience, it didn't seem like that was in any way outside of those circles in society in general. And I think journalists, like other people, don't understand that this is intentional to the degree that is. So they just try and find ways that something could accidentally happen like this. So they just put all their energy into, like detective mode, trying to find out the back story and what could have led to it. When actually, it is literally as simple as, he decided to it. And he decided to make all of his actions up to that point.

[00:18:48.770] - Luke Hart

And I think in many cases, we don't like to believe that this is ordinary and the ordinary people will do this on purpose to other people. Like our father wasn't different to other men, he sat on the same spectrum but he just took it literally. In the same way that, like religious fundamentalists take what's written in the Bible or whatever their document is to be totally literal and will go to an extreme to enact what they think it says. That's what father did with masculinity. He just took that and said, this is what I will base my entire life around. It's scary to think that domestic abuse is as prevalent as it is and it's done entirely on purpose. And I think that journalists, like the rest of us, don't like to believe that aspect of human nature. We kind of try and pretend it happened to someone who deserved it because of a set of circumstances. And would never happen to us, because when we think that abusers are ordinary people, that's terrifying because any of us could get dragged into that. And it's pretty hard to avoid. It's like wandering through a minefield your entire life and not knowing where they are. And abusers don't look - they're not ugly with like scars on their faces and really clear to see. The really dangerous abusers are so dangerous because they're invisible and that's why they're so lethal, because no one sees them. And the ones that go on to kill often you see people just saying what nice guy he was, and blah blah blah, because they've managed to blend and manipulate and act for so long and they're so good at it because they act every day to project something that's different to who they are.

[00:20:20.760] - Dani Garavelli

And so are you seeing any signs of hope in the mainstream media? I mean, there's definitely pockets of women, I think mostly women, who write about gender, and beyond the actual writing about coercive control, a broader discussion of masculinity?

[00:20:33.480] - Luke Hart

I think so. So one of the things that my brother try to draw attention to is that often domestic abuse is referred to in media reporting by that particular incident that happened and the particular circumstances of that incident, because they want to report it and they want people to read about it. But every time you report about an incident as a kind of isolated thing, you miss the fact that this happens - like two women a week are killed by partners or ex-partners and it happens in a different part of the country and it's kind of scattered. But when you draw the dots together, then this isn't an individual problem. This is like a societal problem. And it just happens to be manifesting in individual families. And I think what's really important is that people start to connect it to a societal problem, rather than if we focus on each individual instance of domestic homicide and domestic abuse, then it will never move forward because you can't fix every family's problems one by one. But what you can fix is the structural issues which lead men to behave this way. And one of the key things that leads

men to act this way is their idea of what it is to be a man. And there are more men coming out now to talk about that and White Ribbon is an example, which is really important, where men are starting to say this isn't OK and we're not going to remain silent about it.

[00:21:51.270] - Luke Hart

And I think one of the key things for me as well is that it doesn't suit men, the kind of the masculine culture that these men ascribe to doesn't suit them at all. Our father killed himself, so he was not a happy man. And also, if you're constantly controlling other people, it's like having a management job and you're not getting paid for it. Like, why would you do that? If you're constantly nervous and jealous and obsessed with the intricate details of receipts and phone calls, like you have no time to do anything else. Like why would you do that? And you'd be perpetually anxious about what the other person is doing. Like, you can't be happy. And if your masculinity is so fragile that it's dependent on you basically obsessing over the intricate details of someone else's life. And it's not sustainable and you're like, you're going to be miserable. And a lot of men are like kind of cottoning on to the fact that, like, it's in our self-interest and has been for a long time not to be like this. Because - and often me and my brother get like a lot of stuff coming from men saying, well, what about male suicide rates? It's always like all men kill themselves all the time. Give us some sympathy. But it's like the issue is that men like to, I mean, men are entitled victims as well, right. Like when we're a victim we want to be like number one victim. And when we're like, we just kind of feel like we should always be at the top of a list somewhere, right. And we get a lot of men saying, oh, we're victims, what about men and stuff. But the issue is that men are the perpetrators, right? If you kill yourself, you're the perpetrator of your own death, like, quite frankly. And if you're killing children, you're killing women, you're killing other men, like men are the main perpetrators of violence against everyone and themselves. We need to focus. And it's funny, like we always talk about violence against women and girls and stuff, but the issue is male violence against everyone, including men themselves. That's the problem. And I think we've done, women have done a great job of looking after women, and society try [inaudible 00:23:41] - the state does a crap job, but like people try and protect women, I suppose. But what we need to do is challenge men because that's where it is. And I think there's more men realising the value in tackling it. I think from our own perspective, if we are worried about male victims, we need to tackle male violence as much as if we're worried about female victims. And also just the misery that it brings men, you know, in this kind of obscene competition that men put themselves in. That just brings them misery. And I think that conversation's coming out. Although men are far less introspective than women, in many cases there is starting to happen. And I think hopefully that's where this conversation will start. That we'll see the effects coming down the pipeline and hopefully the culture will start to change, which I think is key.

[00:24:29.100] - Dani Garavelli

Thank you. And yes, it is incredibly important, I think, to see men talk out on the subject, it can't appear that it's only women that are interested in it. If it's OK with you, I'm going to move on to questions. Is that - are you happy? And the first one I'll take, hopefully from Marsha Scott?

[00:24:42.960] - Marsha Scott

How did you know, I'd have a question? Thank you both. And Luke, that was, as usual, moving and eloquent. Quickly, not a comment I just remembered. So Scotland's new domestic abuse law coming into effect, world's gold standards criminalises coercive control, doesn't require any physical violence to be prosecutable, and is - even the word autonomy and liberty are in the law. And I wondered if you had any thoughts about whether if that were the law enforced, that was being talked about at the time when you're - when you lived with the coercive control that you did and when your father murdered your mother and your sister. And I like to use their names, Claire and Charlotte, would that have helped you understand? Do you think that we have an opportunity now in Scotland to make a difference around that?

[00:25:34.570] - Luke Hart

So in our case, it was only when we were sat the police station and in Spalding two days after the murders that we saw a poster behind us that said coercive control. And that was basically I mean, it was almost a personality profile of our father, like all the controlling aspects, right. And we looked up and were like, what the hell is this? And it was actually everywhere because only six months before it

had become a crime in the UK, in England, and we hadn't heard about it at all. And even our mother had been to see a solicitor about the divorce and named all the stuff that our father had been saying and doing and the threats he made. And she didn't pick up on it. And our mum had shared it with friends at work and they didn't pick up on it. Like the whole community, I mean, my mother had told people about what he was doing and people knew what our father was like in many ways, and no one picked up on it. So I think in our case, it was a lack of awareness in the community like, and often people say, like, the - I mean, professionals need to understand it. But we didn't really like encounter them except for the GP. It was all of our family and friends and community that missed it. And actually in domestic abuse often is the kind of first order friends and family that you'll talk to. And if they reflect it back at you or ignore it, then it sort of stops there. And that's what happened with our mother and we didn't realise. So I think coercive control is really important, that there's a definition so people understand. Because I mean, domestic violence makes it really physical. Domestic abuse still has connotations, but control is like key because it's at the root.

[00:27:05.640] - Luke Hart

So I think talking about coercive control helps people understand where it's coming from. But you have to, I think a lot of education is required because it's a form of abuse that - it's really hard because everyone asks the questions of like, you know, what did he do to you? Is what people used to ask us and we would like scratch our head like, well, he didn't hit us. It wasn't like - we're trying to think for one big thing. And that's what often kicks people back. What was that one big thing he did? Well, it wasn't like he did a big thing, but it was like every minute of every day he was grinding away at us over small things like drop a plate and he would yell and yell and yell. Or like he would like, I mean, he wouldn't even like - we had to mimic his emotions, even like that kind of really mundane level. If he was happy, we had to pretend we were happy. If he was sad, we all had to be sad, like the kind of like - there was all these little things that just aggregated. And like, the only way we could explain to people is, it's like a building, you know, like a mountain of grains of sand, like you've got a pile of sand. But before you know it, over years and years and years, it's huge. But you don't know when that happened. And that was kind of what it was like at home. It just sort of it kept going. And a lot of people just kept asking us, you know, what do he do? But that was a different type of abuse. You know, coercive control isn't necessarily the thing they did. It's what they're doing. It's the environment. It's like the air you breathe is affected. And actually, like we found, I mean, even people asking the question of like, why didn't she leave? That forgets that the whole purpose of the abuser is to keep you trapped like it's the hostage situation. It's a liberty crime. Why didn't you leave? Kind of has that idea of him hitting you and you have all the options in the world available. But coercive control is not necessarily hitting you, but all the options are closed.

[00:28:50.590] - Luke Hart

So many people understand it in the flipped manner, people think domestic abuse is assault, but it's not. Domestic abuse is like this strategy of control. And I don't think many people are familiar that human beings do that to each other. And I think that we need to educate people on a broad scale that people do this. Men particularly will do it to women and because they think women are their possessions or whatever, and we need people to be prepared and have the skills to deal with it when that happens to them. So I think it has happened in schools and it has to happen to everyone, like the whole community needs to know about it. And I don't think in our case anything could have happened really, because so few people understood it. But I would hope that in the future, schools and the communities, however, we can educate people whether even through mass education campaigns. We need everyone to know about it, unfortunately, because one it's so entrenched, I think coercive control is invisible because it's so normal that people won't see it, unless it's pointed out to them as well. So we need to we need to everyone to see it really.

[00:29:58.000] - Alys Mumford

After that first question from Marsha Scott, we went to questions from the audience. In order to preserve women's anonymity we haven't recorded those. So I'm going to just summarise what was asked and then we'll go back to Luke. First, we heard from a survivor of coercive control speaking about her experiences and about the importance of enabling women to recognise controlling behaviour, especially when it can be so subtle. She asked what more can be done to raise awareness of coercive control? Then a worker from a women's refuge spoke and she asked Luke if there were

any plans to publish his mother, Claire's diary. The third question came from someone who disclosed that they believed a family member to be in an abusive relationship and she was wondering what could be done to support her.

[00:30:38.720] - Luke Hart

Yeah, the first point about women need training. Absolutely. And I think children need training as well. I mean, I would hope if we trained men that a lot of men would be ashamed of how they treat women as well. Like, I would hope a lot of men, if they were articulated these principles, they would be really, really embarrassed and actually feel really, really bad. Our father was obviously an extreme man. But I know, like I mean, even in myself, I'm not I'm not a nasty person, I hope. But even like I sometimes would do controlling things and not realise, like I mean, growing up under him, it sort of set a bar where we were like, well, can never be as bad as the father. But we learned, I suppose that control was like normal in many cases. And actually we didn't think there was anything dangerous about it. So it kind of made our lives miserable. We didn't realise it made our lives a threat. And I think if we had of learnt at school that our situation was dangerous and kind of we'd got worried and told our mom, hopefully that might have triggered her to leave. And often I think another thing that keeps women staying that we hear a lot, actually, is that like kids need a father or like boys need a father. And I think that's like total nonsense that needs taught out of people as well, because like that in itself reinforces the idea that, like, women do certain things and convey certain principles to children and men do certain things. Like to be a human being, there aren't like female personality characteristics and male ones that you teach one by one. And that by - I mean, we have like single parent families that are totally fine and single sex families and all kinds of - like you could have several parents and be better off with more than less, I'm sure. But everyone seems obsessed with this, like one man, one woman thing. And that's total nonsense like me and my brother turned out like not too bad with our mother and Charlotte as our role models and our father actively like a super negative male influence.

[00:32:38.190] - Luke Hart

So I think that's something that - I don't know how you teach people that. But just like you don't need a father, like as a message would be really helpful one. Because a lot of women feel guilty that if they leave, then, you know, my boy's going to, I don't know what'll happen to him, turn to jelly or become sissy or something or the worst thing in the world will happen. But it won't. And hopefully my brother can at least show that, like, you don't need a father. And I think that's a really important message, too. But I totally get it. By the time you've - by the time you've been hooked in, it's like blackmail you know, like once you've been blackmailed, they'll keep blackmailing you, blackmailing you, black mailing you. And leveraging it and leveraging it until you're like, oh god, I've done some horrible things and I can't get out now. Like coercive control, similar in the fact that it kind of sucks you in, and sucks you in, and sucks you in, and you let a little bit before, you know, it's got even worse and it makes it harder each moment. And I think it's like quicksand and you have to kind of get out early or it can get really hard. So teaching people the nuance is so key. And I think, yeah, I would hope it's in schools and I hope, you know, it's on TVs and I hope it's just a massive - in many ways, I think it would restructure how people have relationships across society anyway. Like I think that coercive control is something that is embedded really and like gender relations and how people treat each other.

[00:33:53.300] - Luke Hart

So yeah. Oh, number two - so our Mum's diary. So our mum actually only, it was only maybe three months of diary that she put together and it was only as we were planning to leave our father. So in many cases he sort of forced us out as well. So the last few months, our father was getting even more controlling and in many ways that did force us to leave at that point. We were probably going to leave at some point, but it was getting worse and worse and worse. So in the last few months, our mother was recording a diary of just day to day stuff that she thought was trivial. But we would like to record it because you never know, like in the divorce, whatever you might need this. It was getting ridiculous. So towards the end, he actually had a safe that he chained up in the garage and he put our mother's like keys, he put her personal documents in it, passports like driver's license, everything. He literally, like as a metaphor for her life, like had her chained up in the garage, in essence. Like all of her kind of legal identity was chained up in that garage. And it was like he would just I mean, that was kind of that was where it got to just before we'd left, like he - it was just ratcheting and ratcheting away. But he was getting worse because he sensed our mother was getting more freedom and he

knew that Ryan and I had been saving and he knew that we had money. And like growing up, my father used poverty as a way of keeping us, like. And that worked, I suppose, to a point until we - I mean, poverty - we sent the money home initially to try and help our mum and Charlotte because he would cancel like obedience training for Charlotte with the dogs. And that was her one thing that she used to love to do. Our mum used to love swimming and he cancelled that. He was just like shutting their lives down.

[00:35:33.140] - Luke Hart

So me and Ryan were sending money home, which had to go through our father to get to them. But we found out it was never even getting to them. He was gambling it. He even gave thousands of pounds away, to someone on the internet, like he was just disposing of money. And what he was trying to do was make sure that we couldn't save enough to get - he would have happily got rid of money so we couldn't look after mum and Charlotte, he would rather be poor and have control and have like a decent amount of money and have a decent life. So when we realised that, we were just like, we cut the money and we just start saving it ourselves. And he knew when we cut the money that we would actually be building it up. So when that happened, he was at that point just ratcheting the control away because - ratcheting the control up, because he knew that our mother would eventually have enough money to leave. And that was when he was reading on the internet about men who kill their wives. That was when he was writing his murder note. Before we'd even planned to leave. So we were keeping a diary up to that point. But even then, we had no idea what was going to happen. But we could I mean, we'll have a look through it. Most of what we wrote, I suppose, was kind of meta-phrasing, some of it. But when you read it, it will seem really mundane, actually, well not all of it. But a lot of it will just be that he was yelling at me, he wouldn't let me sleep again, he was drinking all night. And then just like blah blah blah. It would be stuff that I suppose a lot of women have encountered. But it's the pattern, right. And it's the intensity of it as well, which was getting more and more frequent.

[00:36:54.860] - Luke Hart

Oh yeah the last, the last question about how to get away. I suppose the hard bit is that after a while you actually like - the key thing, I suppose, is the abuser tries to get in your head. Like our father, we always thought of him before we thought of ourselves, like because everything we did might trigger him to do - well it wouldn't trigger him, he wanted to do it. But we thought everything we did might trigger him to do something to us. So even when we were out of the house, whatever we were doing it was always like, are we allowed to do this? Is this going to cause some trouble? And actually what will happen is that she might well be thinking for him, like you know, when you talk to her, you might be talking to him, in essence. He might already be in her head, which might make it quite hard, initially you might have to, like, get him out before she'll, like, kind of acknowledge what's going on. And then I think it's a matter of, oh, I don't know, I mean, I obviously I'm an extreme now, I would just be like disappear, like just disappear. But that's probably not likely to happen, right. People have lives and friends and they don't just want to disappear, but I think, yeah, calling a helpline and probably running it past experts, because to be honest, trying to figure out yourself is like you haven't got a lot of experience, right. But these people will know, they'll hear it day in, day out. They'll know the signs and they'll hopefully be able to give you some sort of assessment of his personality type and what might be a sensible thing to do. But yeah, I think the first thing is like be aware of who you're talking to, because he might well be her head as well.

[00:38:27.470] - Alys Mumford

In our next bank of questions, we had someone asking about the possibility of a 'how to guide' to spot trigger points for coercive control. And a question was asked about the media treatment of Charlotte, Luke's sister and Claire, his mother, and whether they were treated differently in the press. And finally, there was a question around Luke's comments on the reaction of men to violence against women and about how feminist campaigners can get out of our echo chamber.

[00:38:50.060] - Luke Hart

So trigger points, is that something that someone can reflect on themselves and look through? Yeah, so I think the difficulty with that is that when you're in it every day, you like build a skin. The only way me and my brother can really talk about it is the way our father treated us, like he - I was born - like our father basically met our mother, insisted she had a child, threw away her contraceptive pills and I was

born and then he forced her to get married and forced her down the road. I was the only one that was intended. Ryan and Charlotte were both kind of they just happened. They weren't planned. And we knew that because our father made a point of saying all the time. But basically, once we were born, we were irrelevant. Like our father wanted all the attention from our mother, right. We were kids, were just annoying. We were sucking attention away from him. He just wanted us to fail in life because if we succeeded, we were a threat. So he was always worried that we'd like go and ruin his little game. So he just put huge pressure on us growing up. But actually we learned to deal with it and actually either would have broken us or we would have become stronger, right. If you give on a massive weight, you crush them or they end up massive and all strong. So we managed to learn to deal with it, but by learning to deal with it, we sort of stopped noticing it. And I think people that have been in it, it depends how long they've been in it I suppose. Like after a while you just kind of learn to develop whatever you need to develop to manage in that situation. So, I mean, actually, in retrospect, some of our father did was like pretty messed up and tried to just tear us down basically as kids, and destroy our self-confidence and just screaming at us about like irrelevant stuff. But we were just like meh - just like it doesn't matter what you say. I don't like you. I don't care what you say, and we just kind of shut it away.

[00:40:30.200] - Luke Hart

So I think trigger points is I suppose it's helpful, but people often don't relate to it. They just think like my life's a bit different or like, you know, it's not that bad or I mean, even now when I sort of talk about it, in my head I'm like oh it's not that bad, it's not that bad, but he killed them. Like he killed Mum and Charlotte. And it seems obscene, but I suppose we just got used to it. And I think that's that's the challenge. Like when you see posters, when you see, like media, everyone just thinks that's not me. Like, abusers don't think they're abusers and the abused don't think they're abused. And I think that's probably common throughout, that it's almost like I mean, if you ask people to put their hands up, everyone would go - not me. So I think that's really, really challenging. But hopefully I think like teaching people the control aspect is key. And then if we can teach people some of the ways you might react, react to control. Like as kids, we never broke any rules ever, at school, which made us perfect students. But also we were clearly driven by fear and that's not normal. And we were like exceptionally hard working, when actually if you gave someone like bunch of triggers like straight A* students, you would be like, well, that's not domestic abuse is it. But it was, like we had to succeed, right. So I think trigger points are sometimes difficult because everyone might react differently. But if you can kind of articulate the control and some of the subtlety then maybe people can derive from their own experiences maybe.

[00:41:58.620] - Luke Hart

In our case, they treat Charlotte as if she was just like an innocent bystander, like they barely even mentioned Charlotte and pretended that our father hadn't done it, almost. Like it was just, oh, there was someone who was caught up in it as if Charlotte was accidentally just like oh - stray. But clearly it was intentional, but there was - it wasn't in any way represented they intentionally killed Charlotte. And then with our mother, it was obviously all the back story about divorce and how, like all the things all the associated reasons that he might have been pushed or driven to do it. So I think it was yeah, in many cases it was kind of, it was an actor-less crime, really, was how it was represented. And Charlotte just happened to be in the area. And our mother just happened to have kind of created the atmosphere where some accident like that may have occurred, was generally how it was represented. And then our father was just the guy who was great at DIY who happened to be in the area and accidentally caught up as well. It was kind of how the whole thing was represented. So it was just kind of it was all just palmed off as if like an earthquake had happened, really. And everyone was just kind of equally caught up in it. And I think that's one of the things that we found really difficult was just the fact that our father was so easily excused, I suppose, and he wasn't even excused, he was commended in many ways. Our mum and Charlotte were just sort of in the area, was effectively how it was put forward.

[00:43:29.700] - Luke Hart

Me and my brother talked to a lot of our friends about what happened, obviously. And some of our male friends actually are engaging with a lot now because they thought domestic abuse, something happened long, long way away. And they thought that all of this kind of patriarchy and feminism stuff

was all nonsense. Until they saw that we got caught up in it. And then they were like, wait a second, like if this happened to these two, then actually, like it's here. Like this is something that affects us. And actually, I think as well, like I was talking to my mates, like, it's just kind of, it's all pretend like male culture is very pretend. I don't know what it's like to be a lady, because I'm not. But men - it's just all pretend, like men just - you walk around and pretend you're more than you are. You have to always be like on play. And playing the right game. And it's just kind of not fun. And a lot of guys, a lot like younger men now, just kind of bored of it like and also you see so many miserable old men, you just think, well, I'm not doing what they did to get there. Like, I just I really fancy it. Like, clearly it's a track that leads to a pretty crappy place. So I think young people in general just sort of see that it's not going to - you just don't want to repeat it. I think the key bit, though, is to show men that the way that we've been taught to behave is - it makes us, in many ways it makes us overly reliant on other people, which is like really not a happy way to be. Like if your own self-esteem is based on how high you are relative to someone else in a relationship or in a kind of male hierarchy or whatever. It's kind of just becomes, your life just becomes a constant competition and Dog-Eat-Dog. And like, it just is a bit exhausting. And actually it's like what are we competing for, it's like you're competing for a prize that isn't like it's kind of a broken system.

[00:45:21.450] - Luke Hart

So a lot of our friends are coming round. I think the hard bit, though, is just trying to get across to this mass male population that feels hugely victimised at the moment, like the kind of political culture of men under attack that seems to have popped up. And I don't - there's like a level of entrenchment among some men who seem to think that, and often older men as well, which I don't quite get, who seem to think all that privilege is being torn away under their feet when they've enjoyed, well not enjoyed because they're miserable. But they've had all this power for most of their lives. And now they're complaining that it's all about to disappear. And I honestly don't know how you deal with them, like it's just when you get to some point, it's ingrained into you. But, yeah, I don't know. There is a bit of a political culture, a backlash culture amongst men, I think, which is quite a hard one to navigate. But hopefully, hopefully those in power will start to have this discussion and it will kind of filter down. That's what we're hoping anyway.

[00:46:24.840] - Dani Garavelli

Thank you so much. It has been really illuminating hearing what you have to say. And thanks very much.

[00:46:29.280]

[Applause]

[00:46:29.480]

[Jingle]

[00:46:36.780] - Alys Mumford

Huge thanks to Dani and to Luke for giving their time, for the audience who came along the night, and to you for listening. If you're keen to find out more about responsible reporting of violence against women, check out Gender Equal Media Scotland at genderequalmedia.scot

[00:46:50.940] - Alys Mumford

If you want to talk to anybody about any of the issues raised in this podcast, you can call Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline on 0800 027 1234, 24 hours a day. That's 0800 027 1234. If speaking on the phone is difficult at the moment, you can also email them on helpline at sdafmh.org.uk or use their web chat service at sdafmh.org.uk

[00:47:22.860] - Alys Mumford

On the Engender will continue with our shorter programme, The Briefing and other full episodes exploring issues of women's equality in Scotland in the months to come. Speak to you then.

[00:47:31.250]

[Jingle]

[00:47:36.020] - Amanda Stanley

This episode of On the Engender was hosted by Alys Mumford and featured a conversation between Dani Garavelli and Luke Hart. The episode was produced by Amanda Stanley and the music featured throughout was written and performed by Bossy Love. You can follow Engender on Twitter @EngenderScot and be sure to hit subscribe to this podcast now so you don't miss the next episode.

[00:47:56.950]

[Jingle plays out]