

Essential reading for Scotland's children's sector

April – May 2019 Issue 191

Domestic abuse. Criminal responsibility. Knife crime. Islamophobia. Racism. In this edition we confront the times when getting it right for every child is a challenge — and how to rise to it

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Children
in Scotland
magazine



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to flourish.

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Welcome...



Caitlin Logan
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In this issue, we seek to shed light on some complex areas of children's rights; those areas where "getting it right" can be a challenge but where it is most vital to do so.

Our lead interview encapsulates this, as Luke Hart, whose father killed his mother and sister, tells us what he thinks is needed to ensure that other children and young people do not have to endure domestic abuse (page 06).

Elsewhere, researchers from Newcastle and St Andrews Universities outline findings on how Islamophobia impacts on the political participation of young Muslim Scots (page 12); Parenting across Scotland Manager Clare Simpson says a 'hostile environment' for immigrants is tearing families apart (page 20); and our Head of Policy, Projects and Participation Amy Woodhouse argues that Scotland cannot be regarded as a human rights leader while it continues to criminalise children (page 22).

YouthLink Scotland shares details of a new stock

image campaign, developed in collaboration with young people in Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution (HMYOI Polmont), which seeks to change the media narrative on knife crime (page 30).

Plus, we put the spotlight on one of our members, Scottish Commission for Learning Disability, who are working to ensure this generation of young people with learning disabilities is truly included in the mainstream as equal citizens (page 28).

Our 25 Calls campaign is still going strong, with new responses published on our website regularly, as well as here in the magazine. One area of the campaign which we hope to focus on more is early years, and with that in mind our June edition will be jam-packed with insightful and challenging content on what needs to happen to make a step change in early years policy in Scotland.

We are keen to make sure the magazine is as useful and interesting as possible, so we have launched a survey asking for your views on what works and what could be better. For a chance to win a free place on one of our events or training, answer the questions at childreninscotland.org.uk.

Caitlin Logan

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"If you grow up in domestic abuse, abuse is your normal"

Luke Hart, whose abusive father killed his mother and 19-year-old sister before taking his own life, says we must understand the calculated, controlling nature of domestic abuse and its impact on victims if we are to prevent future cases like his own. Interview by *Caitlin Logan*

On 19 July 2016, the small English town of Spalding was shocked by the news of a deadly shooting outside the local swimming pool. Local and national media reported on the events, depicting them as the actions of a man who had lost control. A man who was "always caring", a man who was "a nice guy" and "a DIY nut". His wife, Claire, and daughter, Charlotte, had moved out of the family home just days earlier, and the papers speculated that this had driven him to his murderous end.

Luke, then aged 26, and his brother Ryan, 25, were working out of the country when they heard the news. The inevitable despair and confusion which followed was only compounded by every report, every comment from an acquaintance or family friend, which seemed to them to ignore or misrepresent the decades of their

family's lives which led up to that point. The reality was that while they had never been able to name their experience as domestic abuse – they had only been aware of "domestic violence", which they thought was when "somebody punched someone when they were drunk and lost control", Luke explains – they had been subject to a regime of coercive control. Lance Hart was never physically violent, but he was both psychologically and financially abusive for the entirety of his children's lives.

The fact that this went on for so long, undetected, and with such disastrous consequences was, Luke suggests, largely due to misconceptions about what domestic abuse would look like. "We thought our danger would be clear to us. We thought we would have to traverse through a whole landscape of violence before we got



“Abuse is so pervasive we need to start by assuming everything is not fine”

to murder. The media narrative in our case was that it came out of nowhere, but we only realised afterwards that it wasn't out of nowhere at all.” In fact, research indicates that persistent controlling behaviour is a stronger predictor of domestic homicide than repeated violence (for example, Evelyn Stark's 2007 book, *Coercive Control*).

In order to ensure children are equipped to voice their own concerns about their parents' behaviour, Luke says it is vital to make them aware that this behaviour is, in fact, concerning. “As children, if you grow up in domestic abuse, domestic abuse is your normal, so you don't have something to compare it to. So, it's very important that children are taught what a relationship should look like, so that they don't just get distorted narratives.”

The Hart children never asked for help because they didn't know they could, and none of the other adults in their lives expressed concern about their situation. Luke believes this is because they did not exhibit the signs people may have expected to see. “No one saw us as abused children, because from the outside we

looked like perfect students. We were very quiet because we learned not to argue, and we were well-behaved because our lives were characterised by control. We knew we had to do well in school, because otherwise we would be stuck in the life our father created.”

This is why Luke and his brother Ryan are now working to raise awareness of the complexity of domestic abuse and of the psychological control which it enforces, preventing victims from speaking out. Based on their experiences, Luke and Ryan recommend that adults routinely ask children open questions to give them the opportunity to raise any issues which might indicate a problem. For example, by asking them what the rules are in their home, or what happens if they break the rules. “When we know abuse is so pervasive, everyone has a responsibility to stop it. We need to start by assuming everything is not fine and ask enough questions, rather than assuming everything is fine,” Luke explains.

By the time of her death, Claire Hart had been writing a diary for months, detailing her husband's troubling behaviour – including locking her passport and money in a safe for which only he had the combination – but she had never reported him to the police because she didn't know that there was anything they could do in the absence of physical violence.

In England and Wales, the Serious Crime Act 2015 created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship to help protect people in situations like this, and in Scotland the Domestic Abuse Act 2018 did the same. However, Luke argues that there remains a need to change the narrative on abuse, particularly in the media, which all too often repeats harmful and misleading stereotypes.

Luke is concerned that by focusing on victims' behaviour and seemingly offering excuses for perpetrators' actions, the media frequently “reinforces the abusers' narrative”. “The media needs to accept that it has an obligation to report accurately and that by doing it incorrectly it is complicit with the abuser.”

“We believed the dominant narrative in the media that abusive men lose control, but that leads people down the route that the abuser did it by mistake. The media makes victims look for the wrong thing,” Luke says. “Murder is the ultimate act of control because you've decided that person is not entitled to live.”

The facts in the Hart case make it all too clear that the violence inflicted was not through a loss of control, as evidence recovered by the police found that Lance Hart had been planning his



crime meticulously for weeks – well before his wife and daughter left home. But, Luke says that stories like his are still typically framed in the context of an apparent breakdown on the part of the perpetrator, rather than on the pattern of control which characterises abuse.

“In my experience, the word control was never used about domestic abuse. Once you understand coercive control, you learn that people like this rarely change. You think if the abuser can only manage their emotions it will go away and you’ll have a nice life – but once you understand that it’s down to beliefs, not emotions which fluctuate, you know it’s unlikely to change.”

The beliefs at the heart of domestic abuse are what Luke and Ryan want to see challenged. “This idea of control is linked to a narrow way of looking at masculinity. This is why the vast majority of perpetrators are male and victims are female, while children are used as leverage.”

In this context, Luke sees domestic abuse as “part of the wider issue of gender inequality” and a symptom of the “prison” of masculinity which he says is ultimately hurtful to men, as well as to women and children. “Today, a lot of men see themselves as victims and blame others for who we are. People use male suicide figures to shut you down [when talking about gender inequality], but actually it’s the same thing – men are miserable, but men are in control of that misery. The time has well expired where men need to change.”

Key to making this vision a reality, Luke says, is working with boys and young men while they are “still malleable to how they think about things and see themselves”. “We need to show them that people who abuse are miserable, they are always anxious about the control they have, they are always jealous, and our father killed himself, so he was obviously not a happy person.

“We need to show boys that you give up so much by being like this; you can’t have a real relationship, you can only manage people. And we need to show them they’re not only valuable in relation to what they control. This is important for everyone, but especially boys.”

In order to make this message to young people meaningful, though, Luke says it must be matched with genuine structural change. “It’s very hard to tell people to be open and not strive for power and control when wider social and political systems are based on power and control,” he explains. “We want those who are compassionate to flourish, so we need to change society to show them they won’t be punished for being vulnerable.”

The gendered dimension to abuse could well be eliminated in a gender equal world, Luke suggests, but abuse would likely still manifest itself around other areas of inequality. “We should aim to create the most equal world we can, because while there is inequality, there will be abuse.”

The Harts’ experience highlights the role which economic inequality plays in abuse. Financial control was central to the behaviour of their father, who restricted the activities of his wife and children, thereby isolating them from other people. “Our lives had very constricted boundaries and the reason given for that was that we didn’t have enough money. We didn’t know those were tactics of an abuser.”

Luke has since learned that finances are a common method of securing control over a partner and family members. “They can control you through debts, bank accounts, financial commitments and even just poverty. This is also linked to gender inequality, because women are expected to look after children and make less money than men.”

“We need to change society to show boys they won’t be punished for being vulnerable”



Photographs: Claire and Charlotte Hart (far left), Ryan, Luke and Charlotte Hart (right)

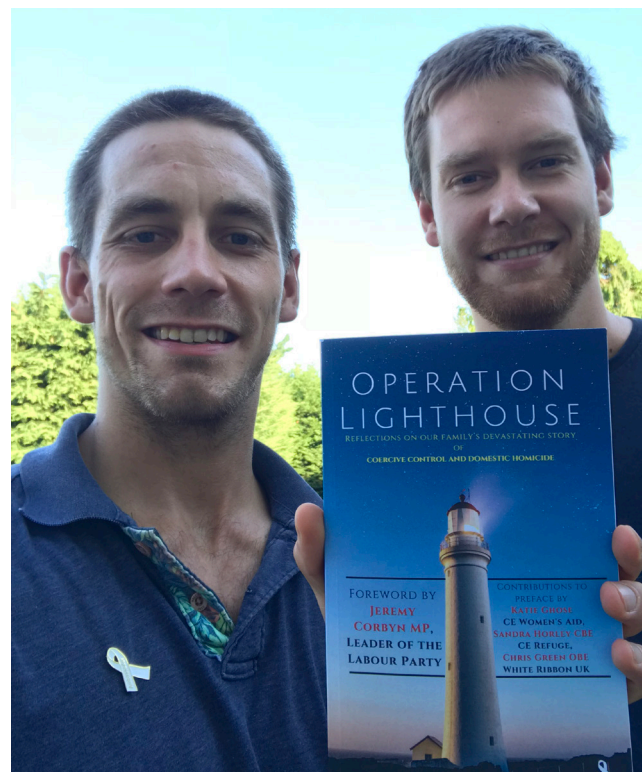
With this in mind, domestic abuse campaigners and other women's and children's organisations have called on policymakers to take these factors into account when drawing up budgets. A number of UK Government actions in recent years – including welfare cuts, the increased use of sanctions, the two-child cap on Universal Credit and Child Tax Credits and the associated “rape clause”, and the single household payment for Universal Credit – have been criticised for posing an increased risk to domestic abuse victims.

Reflecting on the issue, Luke is unequivocal: “Abusers use socio-economic barriers to keep victims stuck. So when the state creates socio-economic barriers, it facilitates abuse.” Regarding the single household payment policy, Luke says that the option which currently exists to allow one partner to request split payments in “exceptional circumstances”, namely “financial abuse” or “domestic violence”, means little in practice.

“Those who think asking to have a split payment prevents domestic abuse don't understand abuse. The abuser would see that as the victim exerting control and the abuser wouldn't allow it,” he says. “Seeing a relatively low number of requests for split payments tells you nothing about the need for it, because the people who most need it won't ask for it.”

Luke and Ryan have become an inspiration to many and have opened up important conversations about men's role in eradicating gender-based violence. In November 2018, *Operation Lighthouse: Reflections on our Family's Devastating Story of Coercive Control and Domestic Homicide* was published, detailing their experience and what they have learned about abuse. Named for the now oddly fitting title of the police investigation into the murders, the Harts chose the name to reflect their desire to offer a warning for others who might suffer a similar fate.

As Ambassadors for White Ribbon UK, the charity which calls on men to speak out about violence against women, and Champions for Refuge, which provides support and accommodation for domestic abuse survivors in England, Luke and Ryan are turning the adversity they've faced into positive action.



This, Luke says, has been an important part of his journey towards rebuilding his life and understanding his own identity. “Working to end domestic abuse gives us strength and power. People who have adverse experiences don't always know they can turn their experiences into something positive and channel it into something moral, and, I'd argue, something directly related to their experience. It's important to show people how to redefine themselves, rather than be defined by others. Don't shy away from your experience but confront it head on.”

A guiding light throughout Luke and Ryan's journey has been the memory of the mum and sister who helped to shape them into the men they are today. “One thing we found helped us was that our mum and Charlotte were morally strong. As young boys we had women who showed us everything we needed to not be like our father. One key lesson we learnt was that you have to fight for what you believe in.”

> Follow Luke and Ryan Hart on Twitter @CoCoAwareness

> Find out more about the work to end domestic abuse in Scotland and the support services available at womensaid.scot

> Zero Tolerance has developed guidelines and stock images for the media, available at zerotolerance.org.uk/work-journalists

“When the state creates socio-economic barriers, it facilitates abuse”

Photograph: Ryan and Luke with their book, *Operation Lighthouse*





Challenging racism: teaching inclusion

Schools are ideally placed to counter problematic attitudes about race at an early stage and ensure the wellbeing of minority ethnic pupils is supported, writes *Carol Young*

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) and respectme, Scotland's anti-bullying service, have been working together over the past year to develop a new publication to support teachers in challenging racist bullying. 'Addressing Inclusion: Effectively Challenging Racism in Schools' was written to complement the national strategy, 'Respect for All', which aims to address all types of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying.

Although CRER doesn't operate an advice service, we regularly hear from parents who struggle to be heard when their children are facing bullying motivated by racism. There's very little support available to these families but equally, there's a lack of information that teachers can rely on to help develop positive approaches to dealing with these issues. Our new resource aims to bridge that gap,

with the ultimate aim of tackling a problem with serious consequences for schools, communities and especially for minority ethnic young people.

Experiencing racist bullying can have a destructive effect on health and wellbeing. In some cases, a young person's self-image, confidence and mental health can be badly damaged by the prejudice they face. Racist bullying can be experienced not just as a personal attack on a young person, but as something deeper which undermines and degrades their family, their community and their culture. Teachers will want to ensure that their approaches to addressing bullying reflect this context, recognising the differing implications where racial prejudice is involved.

Racist bullying is the most commonly reported type of

prejudice-based bullying in Scotland, according to a study conducted on behalf of the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2015. The research showed that 56 per cent of secondary school teachers said they were aware of pupils in their school who had experienced bullying based on race or ethnicity.

CRER conducted its own research on racist incidents and prejudice-based bullying in 2012 and 2018, using freedom of information requests to local authorities. In both cases, the data provided was of such poor quality that it couldn't be used to indicate the scale of the problem. In light of this, we were pleased to be involved in the development of a new approach to monitoring bullying in Scotland's schools through SEEMiS (Education Management Information System).

The Scottish Government has set out its expectation that schools will use this system, but it isn't mandatory and there are no plans to use it to gather national data. In line with recommendations from the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, we strongly believe that a mandatory approach is needed to allow Scotland's schools to build a baseline on prejudice-based bullying and track change over time.

Regardless of the lack of data, it's clear that work remains to be done in building capacity around race and racism. In our experience, concern and uncertainty in Scotland's education sector around understanding race and racism has, in the past, been a significant barrier. We hope that this resource will help to allay these concerns and build confidence.

Crucially, the resource makes it clear that identifying and dealing with this behaviour does not mean labelling a young person as "a bully" or as "racist". Racism is often misrepresented in Scotland as unpleasant acts committed by unpleasant people. Schools are not immune to the effect this has in disguising how racism really operates in social, structural and organisational settings.

Much of our work is about creating practical ways for individuals and organisations to tackle these underlying aspects. Reflecting this, the resource takes a whole-school approach, covering: the impact of racist bullying; early intervention and prevention; recognising and understanding racist bullying; and responding to racist bullying incidents.

One of the most common concerns we hear from parents is that, when responding to incidents, schools might quickly accept that bullying behaviour has occurred but are often reluctant to address the aspect of racism.

The resource gives guidance on getting the balance right, including key questions to identify whether a bullying incident is racist:

Does anyone believe the incident was racist?

Does the behaviour reflect stereotypes based on colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin?

Does the behaviour include use of racial slurs or racist language?

Most importantly, in line with the Macpherson definition of a racist incident (outlined in a 1999 report which recommended steps towards tackling institutional racism in the police, following an inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence), an incident should be recorded as racist if it's "perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person". This includes young people experiencing bullying, parents, teachers and any bystanders who witness the behaviour.

Use of this definition is crucial to ensuring the impact of what's happening can be addressed, regardless of intention (or claims about intention) from the person responsible. This brings approaches in line with those used in policing and in the wider public sector. The resource is also clear that racist language can be used without malice or understanding, but this doesn't mean that it has no impact on young people who hear it. Both minority ethnic young people and the wider school community can be seriously affected by these negative messages.

Racial prejudice can be obvious or hidden, and sometimes the people who hold this prejudice lack the knowledge they need to recognise it in themselves. Someone doesn't have to feel particularly hostile towards people from a minority ethnic group in order to have racist attitudes or to act in a racist way. This makes schools ideally placed to engage with young people who might unwittingly have developed problematic beliefs around race and ethnicity, creating attitude and behaviour change at an early stage.

In order to thrive and reach their full potential, students need safe learning environments which are free from fear, abuse and discrimination. We hope that this new resource will inspire confidence in addressing racism, so that this can become a reality for all of Scotland's young people.

Carol Young is Senior Policy Officer at the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)

"A young person's self-image, confidence and mental health can be badly damaged by the prejudice they face"

> Find out more about CRER's work at crer.scot

> 'Addressing Inclusion: Effectively Challenging Racism in Schools' can be downloaded from the CRER website, respectme.org.uk or education.gov.scot/improvement



Altered image

An innovative project is challenging the image of knife crime across Scotland's media, as *Emily Beever* from YouthLink Scotland explains

Photographs: Open Aye
for No Knives Better Lives
Taking Stock project

No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) is national prevention programme in Scotland funded by the Scottish Government and run by a team in YouthLink Scotland, the national agency for youth work. NKBL was started in 2009 as a response to the high incidence of knife carrying and crime, particularly amongst young people.

"Using terms like 'epidemic' and 'emergency', it's no wonder this creates the idea of an imminent threat"

Knife crime has decreased dramatically in Scotland over the past ten years. Fact. But you could be forgiven for thinking it was a lot more prevalent than it is, thanks to the coverage in the media. Children and young people tell us they are frightened of knife attacks in their schools and streets, describing nightmarish situations akin to school shootings seen in the States.

But that is not the situation here in Scotland. Over the past ten years, the rate of crimes of handling offensive weapons has reduced by 64 per cent, and since 2006-07 the number of under 18s convicted of handling an offensive weapon has fallen by 81 per cent. So how do we get this message and the facts across?

Incidents are reported in the media with accompanying images of faceless people in

hoodies brandishing knives in the reader's face. Using terms like "epidemic" and "emergency", it's no wonder this creates the idea of an imminent threat for young people. We talk about a whole-systems approach to youth justice, but up to this point, it hasn't included the media. We saw there was a gap in the types of images provided by conventional stock image companies.

NKBL approach

As the rate of knife crime in Scotland has changed, so too has our approach. Where previously we thought that showing scary images of large knives or the gory consequences of stabbings would scare young people away from knife carrying, we now believe that this could inadvertently have the opposite effect. When we focus on the fact the most common motivators for young people to carry knives is fear and protection, pairing this with 'scare tactics' doesn't make much sense.

The NKBL method is based on a youth work approach whereby young people choose to get involved; young people are partners in their learning; and we start from where young people are.

Our programme is now shaped around the four Rs of prevention

Risk: You are more at risk of harm if you carry a knife

Responsibility: It's okay to report knife carrying

Resilience: Have the confidence to resist knife carrying in the first place

Reassurance: Hardly anyone carries a knife

Reassurance is about confidently saying that a minority of young people are involved in knife crime in Scotland. This is perhaps the biggest step-change and ties in directly with what the statistics are telling us.

Taking Stock

Inspired by the project, 'One Thousand Words', by Zero Tolerance and Scottish Women's Aid, which aimed to show the reality of domestic abuse, we asked ourselves where we could use our expertise of prevention and bring in a photographer to translate that into usable photos for the media. With Becky Duncan, director of Open Aye, a photographer specialising in social documentary for the third sector, we set to work.

An important part of this project for us was co-designing the images with young people, particularly those with experience of offending behaviour. The focus of NKBL has always been primary prevention, but as knife crime reduces, it is crucial we reach out to young people from communities in which knife culture is still entrenched.

We held three workshops with young people in the Good Shepherd Centre and HMYOI (Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institution) Polmont. For some of the young people, knife crime remained a very present daily reality. Sadly, a few believed it was a situation that was never going to change. They even thought that statistics showing the decline in knife crime was "fake news".

Although initially sceptical about the project, the young people were keen to give us their views on the images currently used and how we could improve them. The consensus in the workshops was that the only way to prevent knife crime was to show the very real consequence of getting caught, and all that this entails. The young people even acted out a number of scenarios they wanted to see in the photos. The arrest photos and the knife in

the Police Scotland evidence bag were two ideas we were able to translate directly into the final collection.

The collection is split into two themes – the consequences of knife carrying, and the positive aspects of being a young person in Scotland. We have produced a brochure to accompany the images which gives tips for journalists on embedding elements of the NKBL prevention approach when reporting on knife crime.

For us, getting the media involved is another piece of the prevention puzzle and an effective way of getting messages out to communities. We hope that our collection will be a useful resource for journalists and picture editors across the UK and will be a catalyst for changing the way knife crime is reported.



Emily Beever is Senior Development Officer at YouthLink Scotland

> To view the full collection, visit noknivesbetterlives.com/practitioners/resources/stock-images