

The Wish Centre Behaviour Change Programme Newsletter



Welcome to the latest instalment of the WCBCN. This is an opportunity for us to share with you, the referrers, information relating to our perpetrator work monthly – namely the Gateway to Change workshop and the Make the Change programme. This will allow us to share case studies with you, not only on how the programme works, but how important your referrals are to making a difference in the lives of those affected by DA/DV by enabling them the chance to make changes to their behaviours and, ultimately, their lives and the lives of those affected.

Important Updates for May 2024

- Online MTC/GTC workshop - Learn about the referral process as well as coercive control and how to identify a primary aggressor.

There is a choice of 2 sessions -
31st May 9.30am - 11.00am and 7th June 9.30am - 11.00am.

Please drop me an email to let me know your interest -
Andrew.mcauliffe@thewishcentre.org


INFORMATION ON SUBMITTING REFERRALS

We understand that time is precious when supporting people in the work we all do. In order to save you waiting time with referrals, there are a few key bits of information you may need to know.

- *There is a distinction between Make the Change and Gateway to Change. Gateway is a 2-session awareness raising workshop and comes with no report on completion. Make the Change is the full perpetrator programme which runs between 16-22 weeks (depending on the outcome of the assessment) which comes with a court accepted report upon completion.*
- *Make the Change and Gateway to Change are not anger management courses. They are for behaviour change in relation to DA and DV.*
- *We can only look at referrals relating to DA/DV towards an intimate spouse or ex/current partner.*
- *It is vitally important to complete the referral forms in as much detail as possible, providing relevant contact details where applicable. This saves time when processing the forms and enables the facilitator to have as clear a picture before going into any assessment.*
- *If open/known to Family Court/CAFCASS additional information/documentation will be requested.*
- *Men must acknowledge that their behaviour is or could be classed as abusive and want to change this.*
- *It is important to know that a referral does not guarantee a place. Acceptance on GTC and MTC is subject to assessment.*

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Domestic Abuse in the Media

Scottish Defence Solicitors to Resume Boycott of Domestic Abuse Cases.



The Scottish Solicitors' Bar Association (SSBA) has declared that its members will resume their boycott of summary prosecutions under section 1 of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2022. This decision includes rejecting court appointments related to these cases. Initially, the SSBA took this stance in 2022 but paused the boycott following the Scottish government's offer of a 10 percent fee increase. However, the SSBA expressed dissatisfaction with the progress since then, noting that inflation has negated the fee increase's impact in real terms.

In a statement, the SSBA said, "Over the past two years, there has been no progress. Literally none. Inflation has skyrocketed and wiped out any real-term gains from the fee increase."

Susan Murray, president of the Law Society of Scotland, commented, "We understand and fully appreciate the deep frustration driving SSBA members to these measures. Criminal defence is a cornerstone of Scotland's justice system, and the Law Society has consistently advocated for adequate funding of the justice sector, including legal aid and the criminal bar in Scotland. Without appropriate funding, it is ultimately the public who will suffer, especially those dependent on legal aid for accessing legal representation in criminal and civil matters. This longstanding issue demands urgent solutions."

The SSBA had suspended its initial action from 2022 when discussions began to establish an annual fee review system for legal aid fees.

'Life isn't like the movies' stalking campaign launches.



Wiltshire Police have launched a new anti-stalking campaign titled "Life Isn't Like the Movies." The initiative aims to raise awareness about the realities of stalking, contrasting it with how it is often glamorized in films. The campaign highlights the severe impact stalking has on victims and encourages people to recognize and report stalking behaviours. The video can be found here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLbnQgsyS5E>

Domestic Abuse in the Media

Cassie Ventura breaks silence on Diddy domestic abuse video.



American musician, Cassie, has spoken publicly for the first time after CCTV footage finally revealed the truth of the domestic abuse she had experienced with her former partner. Cassie had accused rapper P Diddy of domestic abuse, detailing instances of physical violence, emotional manipulation, and coercive control during their relationship. She claimed that Diddy assaulted her on multiple occasions and exerted significant psychological pressure. These allegations sparked widespread media attention and discussions about the dynamics of power and abuse in high-profile relationships. Diddy had furiously denied the claims. However, a disturbing CCTV video emerged showing a violent attack towards the singer.

Cassie posted on Instagram – *“Thank you for all the love and support from my family, friends, strangers, and those I have yet to meet. The outpouring of love has created a place for my younger self to settle and feel safe now, but this is only the beginning. Domestic violence is THE issue. It broke me down to someone I never thought I would become. With a lot of hard work, I am better today but I will always be recovering from my past. Open your heart to believing victims the first time. It takes a lot of heart to tell the truth out of a situation that you were powerless in. I offer my hand to those that are still living in fear. Reach out to your people, don’t cut them off. No one should carry this weight alone.”*

Diddy called his actions *“inexcusable”* and says he takes *“full responsibility for my actions.”*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxWKKF61bb4>

Domestic Abuse in the Media

PDS digitises process for domestic violence protection notices.







West Yorkshire Police will pilot a new digital process for issuing Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) developed with the Police Digital Service (PDS) and Tisiski. The digital system aims to streamline the previously cumbersome process, integrating all necessary elements into a cohesive platform. This pilot, set to begin this month, will be evaluated by PDS, which plans to share the results with other UK police forces to enhance domestic abuse response and victim protection.

Chief Inspector Dan Tillett of West Yorkshire Police said: *“This solution will undoubtedly safeguard more victims, both locally and nationally, and deliver a faster and more reliable process. I look forward to piloting this innovation in West Yorkshire in the near future and evaluating the results.”*

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Featured Article

The Love Witch: A Horrific Exploration about the Mental Repercussions of Abusive Relationships

by Gelsomina De Lucia







Since its release in 2016, Anna Biller's *The Love Witch* has become synonymous with the word 'feminism'. However, by stating that this explicit feminist piece solely discusses female centric issues, restricts, and denies other layers. This editorial will briefly touch upon how the film explores the mental repercussions of abusive relationships.

The opening sequence introduces us to Elaine and allows her to openly reveal that she has murdered her ex-husband due to a "nervous breakdown" after he left her. She comforts the audience by saying she is "cured" but her expression is possessed by fear as she states that she "still gets intrusive thoughts." The most important revelation in the opening sequence is when Elaine shares that she is a victim of abuse.

"My therapist told me that I am not unusual at all. People are abused all over the world. Everyday. Much worse than me...and they do fine."

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On the surface, this dialogue serves to assure the audience that her experience was not as bad as it seems. However, this is a form of dismissal, and it is present throughout the film. This dismissive behaviour is prevalent during a stressful moment for Elaine, and it is otherwise known as 'Escapism'.

In psychology, escapism is generally defined as a desire or behaviour to ignore, evade, or avoid reality. During traumatic experiences, many individuals naturally 'escape' the situation mentally in order to avoid further distress and psychological harm.

One specific scene which displays this clearly is the closing sequence. Elaine violently murders one of her lovers and as soon as she is satisfied with her outburst, her mind immediately finds comfort in the fairy-tale universe she has been trying so intensely to actualise throughout the film. This purging of her truth causes a cataclysmic effect on her perspective, mental health and causes chaos towards people within her social circle.





As the film progresses, we begin to establish that the "intrusive thoughts" are not of murder but flashbacks of her abuse. Halfway through the film, we gain an insight into Elaine's psyche which explicitly displays that it is tormented by toxic words injected into her by her ex-husband and father, thus indicating that Elaine has constantly been surrounded by abusive men.

A flashback - or "intrusive thought" - presents itself halfway through the film and bombards the audience with abusive and condescending language while - simultaneously - allowing the audience to establish Elaine's history.

The quotes from that segment are as follows:

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"I love you Elaine...you know that don't you? I love you very much...But you need to be more careful. Dinner was late three times this week and that house is a total pigsty. Did you know I found a whole hot dog under the bed this morning? And why don't you ever brush your hair? You need to take care of yourself and of the house. I am embarrassed to have people over. I've been real patient up until now, but you need to step up your game."

"I have a crazy bitch for a daughter. What? You're not crazy? Well, if you aren't crazy, you're stupid. Which one is it? Are you crazy or are you stupid? And you can lose a few pounds. You are looking a little fatty."

"Oh my god Elaine! You have lost so much weight! You have such a hot body now!"





Once dissected, the first quote and third quote above brings to light how her ex-husband has heavily influenced and distorted her perspective and behaviour as she re-enacts everything, he has told her to do in order to gain "perfect love and perfect trust" from other men. Elaine's first encounter with her first lover explicitly displays this. She insists on cooking for him and preparing a table for two. As soon as they finish eating, they immediately have sex. Everything she does in this sequence is to please him in the ways her ex-husband has brainwashed her to do in order to receive "perfect love and perfect trust".



These misogynistic beliefs being injected into our protagonist/antagonist are not the only issue in this sequence. During the intimate scene, there is an effect over the shot which can heavily symbolise that Elaine is dissociating.

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Dissociative disorder is a mental illness that affects the way you think. Traumatic experiences, problems that cause stress, and difficult relationships are a few examples that can lead to dissociative disorders.

If you dissociate you might feel like you are not connected to your own body. Or like you are watching things happen around you, without feeling them.







This quote is explicitly displayed in the sequence where Elaine has sex with her first lover. In that scene, there are multiple versions of herself that leave her body and float around her which cements the idea that she is dissociating as she is clearly not connected to her body at that moment. Moreover, her facial expression seems static which further solidifies this idea as she seems to not be present. There is an explanation for this dissociation and that can be found through the characterisation of the cult leader. The film alludes to the notion that he sexually abused Elaine, and this can easily be established during scenes where they share the screen together through their contrasting body language. She is distant and protective of her personal space whereas he rejects her personal boundaries and always inappropriately crosses the line. Consequently, it is clear that her numerous abusive scenarios have amalgamated and formulated a detrimental influence upon the way Elaine views men and even experiences sexual pleasure. Thus, signifying that she is not "cured" like she states in the beginning.



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Hooks (2000) offers a generic yet poignant description of feminism by stating that feminism is simply a “movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.” Hooks continues her introductory paragraph by debating that this definition is “open-ended” therefore, encompasses men. On this premise, The Love Witch should not be classified as a feminist icon as our lead puts men down for crying and reduces them to sexual beings who exist only to please her.







It is these dangerous behaviours that Elaine executes that are praised on social media. Specifically, I have personally noticed that these positive validations of her actions mainly come from women. These individuals tend to utilise the ‘good for her’ meme which is popular amongst those within the online horror community. The joke is a problematic one as it explicitly condones her actions which have been triggered by severe mental health issues. Moreover, the premise of the joke emphasises that the character has every right to commit her crimes as she has been the subject of domestic abuse. Therefore, this popular meme embraces a toxic mentality and rejects and discourages personal growth and healing.

Others might argue that Elaine’s behaviour mirrors misogynistic ideals. However, through her embodiment of these ideals, *she becomes possessed by misandry*. Ultimately, my comprehension of her behaviour situates her within the ‘abused becomes the abuser’ complex.

I primarily see her on par with Norman Bates. They have both been subject to abuse for multiple years and have become torn between their own desires and trapped within ideals set to them by people abusing their power. These behaviours should never be celebrated. Yes, their past is tragic which renders them tragic beings but, it does not eradicate the lives they have taken nor do their actions make them powerful. Their actions make them extremely mentally fragile and villainous.

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In conclusion, describing Elaine solely as a feminist icon truly hinders further interpretations of the text. By diving into the film and placing its surface narrative to one side, one is able to digest more. This film may not have intended to be read in this manner but once considered, it is difficult to ignore that the film touches upon the horrors of the mental repercussions of abusive relationships.





The key points about The Love Witch can be summarised as –

- Domestic abuse is portrayed through the manipulative and harmful relationships that Elaine, the protagonist, engages in.
- Elaine uses love spells to control men, leading to obsession, mental breakdowns, and death.
- The film explores themes of power, control, and the dark side of romantic obsession.
- Elaine's actions reflect a reversal of traditional gender roles, highlighting a woman as the abuser as well as the abused.
- The movie critiques societal expectations of love and the destructive consequences of manipulating emotions.



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End of Programme Participation Feedback - PD



What has been your main learning from attending the Make the Change programme?

Letting things brood letting things develop without talking, once that occurs everything just builds up and then you start looking for excuses.

Looking back, do you recognize your role in perpetrating abuse in relationships and do you accept responsibility for it?

Yes, I totally accept my responsibility and what happened in the relationship.

Do you feel you have a better understanding and control of your own feelings?

Yes, back to rationalising again I think before I act and thinking before I do or say something. To slow the thoughts and consequently my actions whereas before I would fly off the handle.

Do you feel you have a better understanding of other people's feelings and perspectives?

In terms of how I was with the jealousy it was getting my partner down and I know it was making her upset, the way I was behaving was a form of control and I understand why she felt that way.

What do you hope to achieve in future relationships?

Just to be like a normal person, happy, laid back and enjoy life.

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What part are you going to play in having a non-abusive relationship in the future?

I am not going to drink alcohol; I am going to keep on listening to my partner taking on board her feelings and both of us being equal in the relationship. I will continue to rationalise things and remember where I was, so it does not happen again.

How do you feel about the victim now you have completed the programme?

I continue to be sorry towards her and my son about what I put them through with my behaviour at the time, something that should not have happened.

Can you identify any of your belief system that has been challenged on the programme?

That I was right, that she deserved it because I was cheated on and that this was totally wrong.





What was difficult for you on the programme?

Talking about what I did and recognising I was wrong and still do find this hard. Acknowledging that I was the abuser and has previously been justifying my actions.

***Please do continue to
send referrals for
GTC/MTC to
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