



Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board Manager's Blog

April 2016

Domestic abuse on the airwaves

I haven't really paid any attention to Radio 4's programme *The Archers* but I know lots of people do and are keen listeners. I might have caught a few minutes after the news before switching channels but I don't tune in.

Over the past few months a number of colleagues have mentioned to me that the programme is running a story line about domestic abuse featuring Helen Titchener (nee Archer) played by Louiza Patikas, her young son Henry and her husband Rob.

So I did a bit of catch up listening via the BBC iPlayer and it is very powerful storyline. Also see Elizabeth Day's article – [Archers' everyday story of domestic abuse divides fans of rural nostalgia](#) – The Guardian 26 March 2016 pg 18.

The story reached a dramatic conclusion on Sunday evening (03 April 2016) with Helen having made the decision to leave her abusive husband but he found her bags and began to assault her once more. Helen tried to grab her secret phone to call for help but Rob (Timothy Watson) tore it from her and attacked her. He then forced a knife into her hand and told her she would only be free if she used it.

If you haven't listened to this episode I will not spoil it for you as you can hear it on the BBC iPlayer.

Listening to this 'slow burn' story develop, Day makes an interesting point about using radio to give this message:

*'we are forced to imagine ourselves into each situation, rather than having all the visual work done for us as it would be on television. It's also one of those rare occasions when the traditionally slow pace of *The Archers* has become integral to the realism of the story.'*

And as one of my colleagues was telling me, she is now shouting at the radio, and I can see way!

The prevalence of domestic abuse is shocking. Figures from the Crime Survey England and Wales, 2013–14 (published by the Office of National Statistics in 2015) show:

- At least 1.4 million women and 700,000 men aged between 16 and 59 experienced domestic abuse in England and Wales in 2013/14 – 8.5% of women and 4.5% of men

We also know that:

- At least 29.9% of women and 17.0% of men in England and Wales have experienced domestic abuse at some time [1].

Both these figures are *likely* to be an underestimate, because all types of domestic violence and abuse are under-reported in health and social research, to the police and to other services (Source National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) see [Domestic violence and abuse | Introduction | Guidance and guidelines | NICE.](#))

Rather than just listen passively to how it is playing out for Helen Titchener, we have the opportunity to take 2 simple actions to tackle this problem in Norfolk.

Frist, have a look at the **NICE Quality Standard [2] on Domestic Abuse [QS116]** published last month (29/02/2016), which is a really useful document. While focused on the health sector, it has much to offer other services and sectors. This Quality Standard has 4 statements:

[Statement 1.](#) People presenting to frontline staff with indicators of possible domestic violence or abuse are asked about their experiences in a private discussion.

[Statement 2.](#) People experiencing domestic violence and abuse receive a response from trained staff.

[Statement 3.](#) People experiencing domestic violence or abuse are offered referral to specialist support services.

[Statement 4.](#) People who disclose that they are perpetrating domestic violence or abuse are offered referral to specialist services.

Secondly you can make a donation to the **JustGiving** page set up by one Archers listener, who was so moved by Helen's plight he wanted to raise money for the domestic violence charity Refuge, see [Refuge - Domestic Violence Help | Domestic Abuse Charity](#) (or another domestic abuse charity of your choice).

Elizabeth Day reports the campaign has raised more than £73,000 so far. See [Paul Trueman is fundraising for Refuge.](#) Since reported here donations have reached over £80,000.

We wait to see how The Archers scriptwriters will now develop and escalate the storyline for Helen and Henry after the Sunday's episode.

The key point is that for every fictional Helen, there are thousands of real ones and by improving staff's awareness using the NICE guidance and with the money raised, real women will benefit from the story having been told.

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[1] Smith K (editor), Osborne S, Lau I et al. (2012) Homicides, firearm offences and intimate violence 2010/11: supplementary volume 2 to Crime in England and Wales 2010/11. London: Home Office.

[2] A NICE Quality Standards describe high-priority areas for quality improvement in a defined care or service area. Each standard consists of a prioritised set of specific, concise and measurable statements designed to drive measurable improvements in the 3 dimensions of quality – patient safety, patient experience and clinical effectiveness.

You might also be interested to read Louiza Patikas's article on playing this role at [Playing Helen in the Archers, I hope to show domestic abuse can happen to anyone | Louiza Patikas | Opinion | The Guardian](#)