

A man and a woman are standing in front of a car. The man is on the left, wearing a dark t-shirt and jeans, looking down. The woman is on the right, wearing a fur jacket and a striped shirt, looking forward. The background is a residential street with trees and houses. A pink tab with a white exclamation mark is in the top right corner.

# Domestic Abuse Research

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

**bbfc** View what's  
right for you

SLESENGER RESEARCH

Goldstone Perl Research

# Research Aims & Objectives

Research was required to provide insight to **support future classification** of domestic abuse in film, TV shows and advertising.

## KEY OBJECTIVES

1

To glean **reactions** to a range of domestic abuse material in **film, TV** and **advertising** (*Women's Aid*)

2

To **maximise our understanding** of domestic abuse in film by **interviewing experts** alongside **survivors** and the **general viewing public**

3

To assess potential **aggravators and mitigators** for domestic abuse in film, TV and advertising

4

To review **ratings info** for domestic abuse and identify potential to **enhance communication**



# Research Sample

Nine focus groups with adults

## 4 x survivors of domestic abuse

3 x female survivors

1 x male survivors

*Spread of socio-economic groups*

*30-50+ years (approx.)*

## 1 x experts / professionals

All respondents were asked to view a selection of **films / TV episodes / documentaries** before attending the research groups

## 4 x general film viewing public

3 x female

1 x male

*BCIC2(D)*

*30-50+ years (approx.)*

# UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA





# Understanding the far reaching impact of domestic abuse

## HYPOTHALAMUS

**Remembers facts not emotion**

Sends facts to cortex (*thinking part of brain*)

## AMYGDALA

**Emotional response system**

Remembers the feel not facts of events

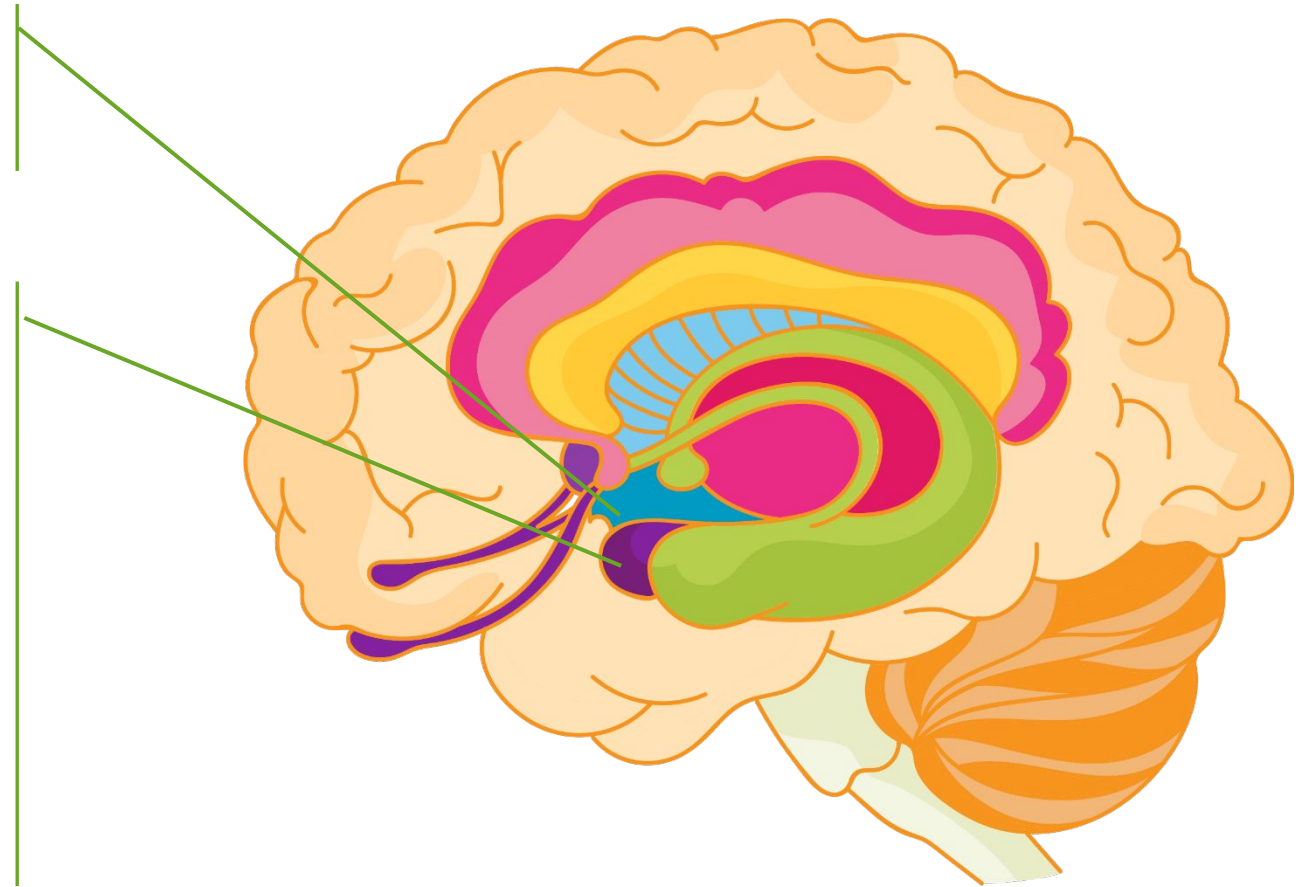


## STRESS

Stress hormones (*fight, flight, freeze*)  
prevent hypothalamus from  
functioning

## PTSD = RESULT

Brain does not register that the trauma has ended



— “ —

Trauma has caused actual structural changes in our brains, a rearrangement of our internal head furniture which means that we are more sensitive than others to certain cues in the environment. A lot of this centred around a tiny part of the brain called the amygdala, which is often referred to in metaphorical terms as the ‘smoke detector’ of the brain. Most of the sensory information that is constantly zinging into the brain ends up in the amygdala, and within around seven milliseconds the ‘smoke alarm’ assesses it for threat. It’s as if it’s sniffing it and checking it out for smoke. If, based on previous patterns and experiences, this muddle of data smells smoky, then the alarm is set off. The amygdala initiates the body’s arousal systems and there is an immediate increase in heart rate, breathing, blood pressure and blood sugar levels in order to prepare to deal with this supposed threat.

*Carolyn Spring – Recovery Is My Best Revenge*

— “ —

This is really the crux of PTSD: the mind and body continuing to respond as though the event persists or recurs on a regular basis.

*Babette Rothschild – Eight Keys to Safe Trauma Recovery*



# Past traumatic events are often re-experienced in the present

**Emotions** = changes in both body and brain in response to stimuli:

- Physiological changes (*heart rate, hormones*) occur in body and relayed to brain

**Body awareness** and **emotional awareness** are necessary for decision making

Experiences we encounter in life **leave pleasant / unpleasant traces in our bodies**; somatic markers

- Out of awareness
- Can be triggered by any of our senses

“

I remember I watched *Murdered By My Boyfriend* when I was in an abusive relationship, and I felt it and whatnot, because in that scene, which always touched on me, was when she was saying goodbye to her friends and you can tell she doesn't want to go, and it's just the level of fear in a lot of these women. Like, to anyone else it seems so, 'I don't understand what she's going on about,' or even though maybe they don't pick up on it, but we can see the jitteriness and can pick up these subtle tell tale signs ~

~ **Female survivor**

”

It's those small nuggets of things that stick the knife in, they are mental torture and will cause mental torture throughout the whole week keeping you up at night - certain words trigger you and you are thinking about things that are going to happen next

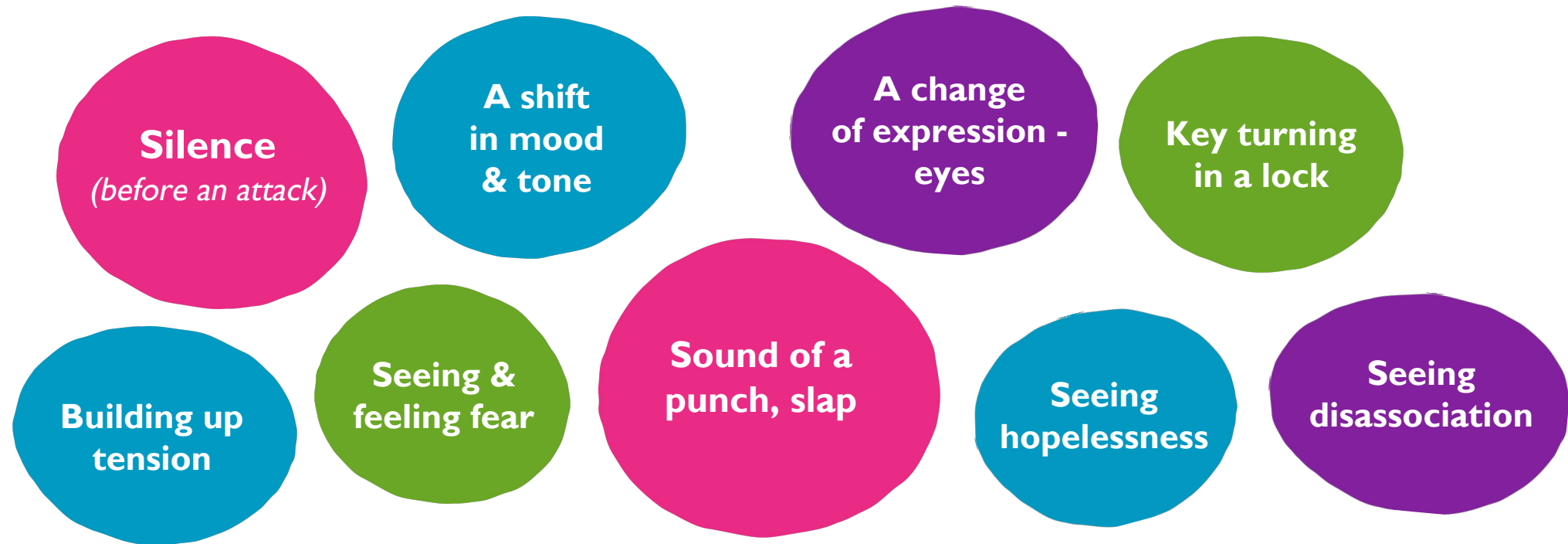
~ **Male survivor**

\*Antonio Damasio

## Survivors are left with a number of **unique somatic markers**

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WHILE THESE ARE IDIOSYNCRATIC AND RELATE TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, THERE WERE SOME COMMON THEMES:





## Quotes: Somatic markers

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“ I think it's still impactful because you hear the blow, I think when you're watching it, you're using all your senses, you've got your gut feeling going, you're anticipating what's happening, then you hear the noise, that's with your ears, then you see the blood with your eyes. It just kind of gets you really heightened.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It makes it feel more violent the person who directed that was relying on images - when you take one of the senses out of it you create a different dynamic you'd expect screaming and you'd expect to hear the punches.  
~ **Expert**

“ I think because when you've been through you can, kind of, I can watch it with a room full of my friends who have not experienced domestic abuse, and I know straight away which one the abuser's going to be, and who's going to be, and I can see it straight off, whereas my friends go, 'Oh, do you reckon? I don't,' 'Yeah, he's going to hit her in a minute.'  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I've blocked the number, and then you don't hear anything for days and weeks and you think nothing's happening, and then all of a sudden you get that thud at your door - you're always waiting for it, that thud at the door.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ You know, you've locked the door and you've barricaded yourselves in, and you're absolutely sobbing your heart out, and then it all goes quiet, and you're like, 'Is this about to get worse, or have they actually walked away?'  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Yes, I've been there where I've barricaded, I've had to phone the police, and then the police are just going, 'Yes, we'll see what we can do.'  
~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Somatic markers cont.

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“ The first thing was that look when he first sees the girl at the party, that look that that man gave her as she walked past. That was me, like, ‘Oh, no.’  
~ **Female survivor**

“ That hysteria is so relatable, it’s not even real. That level of you can’t even be angry anymore, it’s like you’ve got to laugh. Seeing that, experienced it, it is so real.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ The look on his face gave me goosebumps.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Like when she gets a text and he’s like, ‘Who’s that?’ Takes it and looks at the phone, little things. The same as you, I’ve been there, so I know people like that. It’s really scary to actually see sometimes it can get to that.  
~ **Woman, General public**

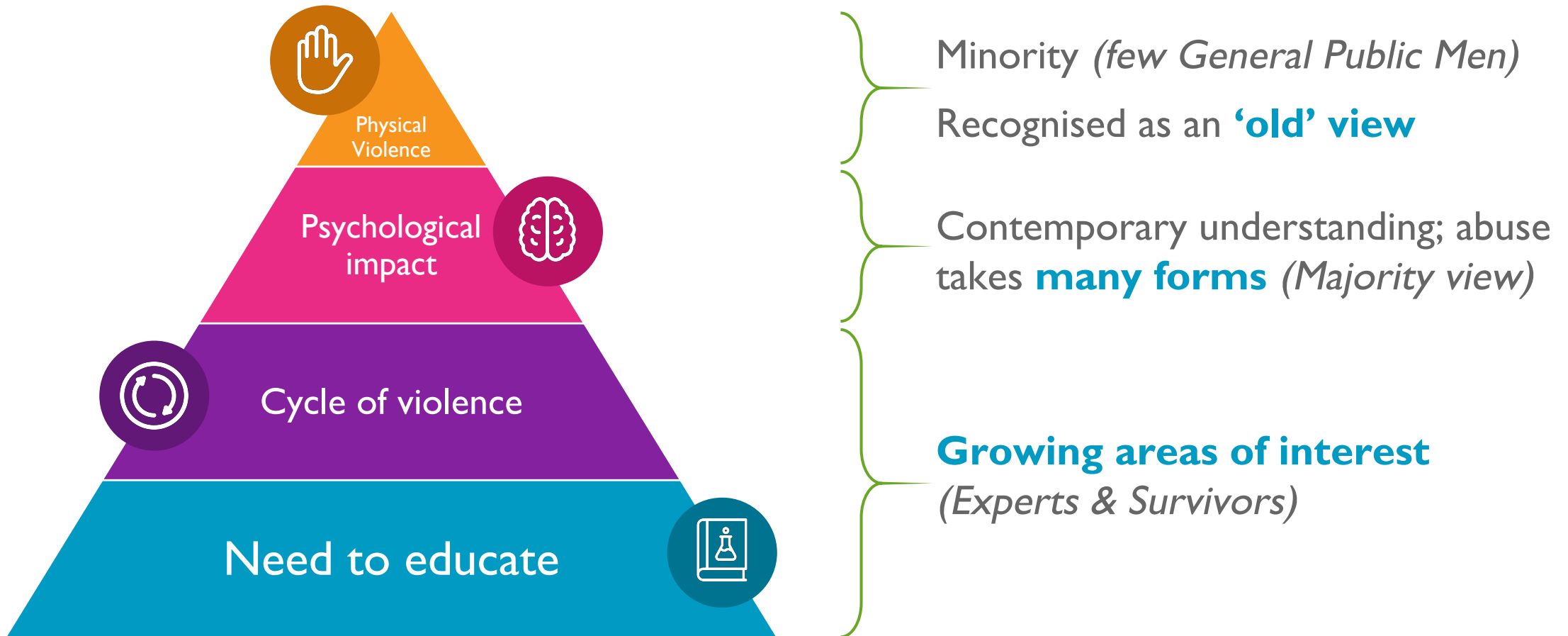
“ The little things, like the quivering and staying really still. It wasn’t even anything really obvious, it was just the constant fear of the dad. When the dad was banging the sink with his fist.  
~ **Female survivor**



# THE RESPONDENTS



## Across the sample, respondents understood domestic abuse differently





# Yet widespread appreciation of the importance of this subject as an area of consideration for the BBFC



**Hitting mainstream,  
even pre-watershed:**

*EastEnders*  
*Coronation Street*  
*Silent Witness*



**In the news and  
political & legal  
arena:**

Domestic Abuse Bill  
Online & special reports



**People are keen to  
educate children &  
teenagers about this  
important issue**



**Perhaps less of a  
'taboo' than before**

Willingness and  
openness of respondents  
to discuss the issues  
noted across the groups

“It brought home to me that I've got a daughter who's eleven, who's really mature for her age. And I've never had a conversation with her about violence in relationships. And I thought, why haven't I? But that's because that's not what we're about. It's not what we've been exposed to in our world, thank God. But it is there. So, is she just going to go into life through rose-tinted glasses?  
~ Woman, General public

## Quotes: Educational Role

“ I just think, in this day and age now, for the way the world is, from 15, they know a lot more than you think they know, and they need to know what happens in the horrible world that we live in now, and what can happen, and to me, I think 15 [age rating] is right.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I watched *Murdered By My Boyfriend* twice because my daughter, I sat her down and watched it with her, she's just turned 16 and I wanted her to be aware. I just wanted her to be aware, there are people out there like that, that do talk to you, you feel like a princess, that treat you like a princess but they'll drag you down. She did find it hard at the end.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Then start those conversations with you, even if it's the marketing or the educational tools are aimed at parents and we can then instigate those conversations especially with those that don't have it in them, then that would be of value.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Yes, I will do. I hadn't actually given it any thought about the educational side of things with them, and so I just thought, 'Oh, to protect my little ones, I wouldn't want them to see it because it's 18. But now that that's been raised, I think it's a very good point, especially going out and speaking in schools now, and what we're trying to target around Cheshire East, I work a lot with the authorities, particularly the police and social care and whoever, NHS. We're trying to tackle it at a younger end, so that it doesn't start at 15 or 16 with the rape of the young girls or the gangs like this, so they start to recognise the subtleties, it's not right from a much younger age. And I think that's very important to try and break the cycle.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ We need to hold the verbal and emotional abuse in the same regard as the physical as it needs to be equal. People say it's not physical therefore it's not violent and it's not abuse.  
~ **Expert**

“ I thought it was important to see the violence towards a heavily pregnant woman as being a professional we know that violence does often increase during pregnancy so important to highlight it.  
~ **Expert**

“ We all think I've got to talk to them about sex, I've got to talk to them about drugs, we've got to do this, bullying on the social media and that's not on the list.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## The **General Public** groups had **plenty to say** on this subject



### Women

- Very sensitive to **visceral cues**
- Able to talk about **different types of abuse** (*and naming them, especially coercive control*)
- Appreciate the BBFC **looking at this issue** and where it needs to be discussed



### Men

- Often focused more on **physical, visual violence**
- However, understanding **could deepen** over the course of the focus group
- Again, want **greater openness** of this issue



## The **Survivors** were at **different stages of their recovery**, but were **engaged and enthusiastic** respondents



### Women

- See themselves as **survivors** not victims
- Keen to use their experiences to **help BBFC or others**
- See the impact of abuse being **lifelong**
  - Especially if children are involved
- The material could be **very challenging** at times but respondents stayed with the process



### Men

- **Grateful to be included** in the research
- Their feelings are often **more complex** (*and more shameful*)
  - See themselves as **victims** of manipulation and control
  - Could get bogged down in the material – **male perpetration** and **female victims** (*perpetuating a myth*)
  - Significantly susceptible to same somatic markers/triggers

## Quotes: Survivors vs Victims

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“ If you’re a victim, you’re still suffering. But if you’re a survivor, well, you’ve got through it.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It brings out how strong you can be.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I hate the word ‘victim.’ I hate it. But I honestly think you’re a survivor when you’re in it, because being in it, until that final, final, when you say, ‘that is it’, finally, or if you’re moving the partner out, the most dangerous point, I think you’re a survivor all the way through, to be with anyone that treats you the way you’ve been treated.  
~ **Female survivor**

## Survivors reflected on **what it was like to watch domestic abuse** both in the **research** and in **general**



### Denial

- Often linked with **early stages** – do not relate the material to themselves



### Triggered

- Can be **very difficult**, especially if **unexpected** (e.g. *on the soaps*)
- Can be **re-traumatising** and very upsetting
- Often leads to **avoiding certain content**



### Integrated

- Seemingly accept what's happened to them; **part of them** and their story
- Grateful that domestic abuse is **in the mainstream** and often realistic and sensitively handled – appreciate educational role



## Quotes: Watching DA

“ I think it just put me into a depression, because you look at it and you feel, like, ‘That’s what I’m going through now.’  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I would watch it and go, ‘God, that’s so bad. She should leave.’ I was totally in denial. I just thought, what I was going through wasn’t anything like that at all. Such denial.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It was triggering as he was violent to her on a continual basis and she kept going back to him. There seemed to be some hope in her that he would change and the situation would change - I was with her for five years I thought there was hope that she would change .  
~ **Male survivor**

“ As victims we find things more upsetting and we feel more and it can be powerful but it’s good to know that it is being documented and talked about with the possibility of changing people’s perceptions and views.  
~ **Male survivor**

“ So really, I’ve gone off watching any kind of television, I just want peace at the moment. So, this has been a big thing for me, really. I think this has challenged me as well. It’s good.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Men don’t speak up as much as a woman would, and they’d probably be too embarrassed or ashamed, and they just shrug it under the carpet, you know?  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I don’t mind watching anything with domestic violence. However, I do need to get myself in the right frame of mind, because the after-effect of watching this, it really sticks with me, it really brings a lot back, and I’ve got to do what’s right for me.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I know a lot of the women’s support groups will absolutely, categorically avoid it, because it re-traumatizes and re-triggers. But I enjoy watching it, certainly, real life documentaries, say on the CPS and things, have not exactly portrayed how it is. So, I do like watching it just to kind of challenge it.  
~ **Female survivor**

## The **Experts/Professionals** see the **impact of domestic abuse** on a **regular** and **ongoing** basis

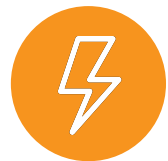
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### **Often survivors of domestic abuse themselves**

Motivation for working with victims

### **Demonstrate broad experience and understanding of issues related to domestic abuse**

Readily identify somatic markers  
Effective at assessing impact of material



### **Can be triggered by material shown**

But retain rational and logical response



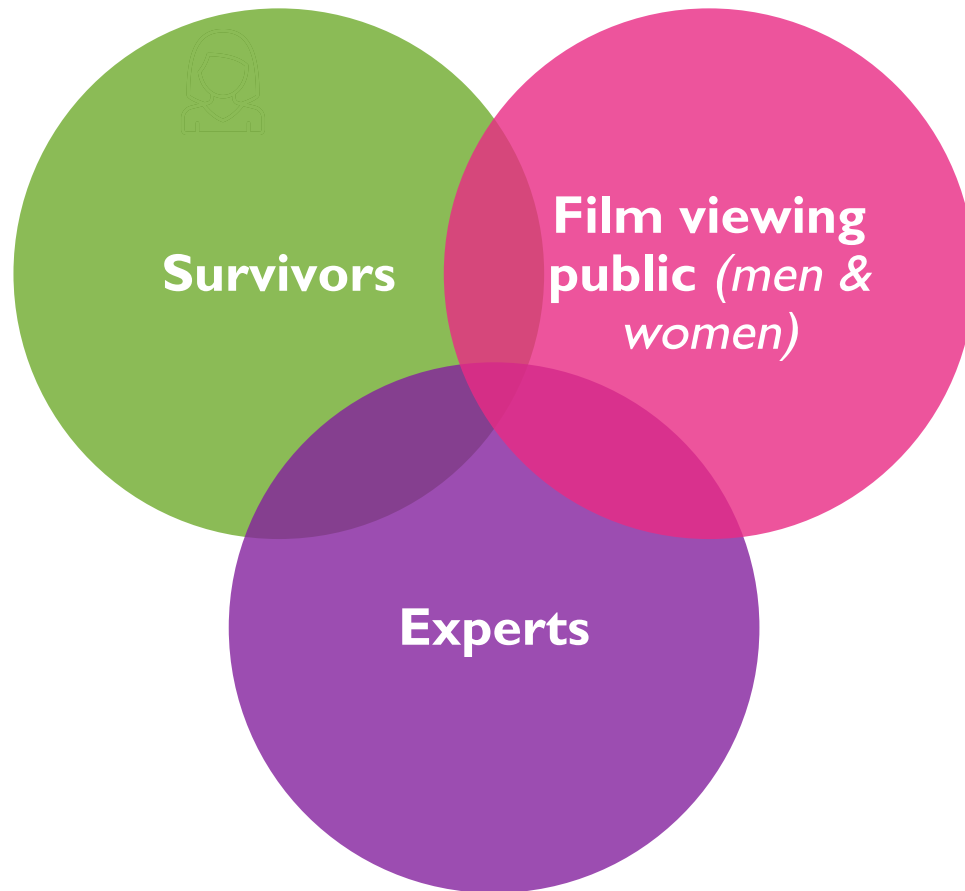
### **View education and building awareness as vital**

# IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BBFC





## We can't assume that respondents fall into discrete groups



### Safe Lives

- **8.2%** of female population and **4%** of male population suffer some form of domestic abuse

### Women's Aid / Crime Survey England & Wales

- This figure rises to **28.9%** for women aged 16-59
- Only **18%** of those who experienced abuse reported abuse to police

## How should the BBFC talk about this subject?

**‘Domestic Abuse’  
– not Domestic  
Violence**



**Contemporary  
Well-understood  
Broad** – includes:

- **Psychological**
- **Economic**
- **Gaslighting**
- **Children**

“ Yes, but, from the work that I do with Women’s Aid, we are trying to get rid of the word ‘violence’ and replace it with ‘abuse’. Physical abuse comes under domestic abuse. ~ **Female survivor**



**NEEDS TO BE FLAGGED BY RATINGS INFORMATION IN A SUCCINCT  
AND OVERT WAY...**

## Quotes: DA or DV

“ I think because abuse is so many things, isn't it, it's emotional, psychological, financial, sexual, intimidation, just everything, it's not just hitting.

~ **Female survivor**

“ It can be a psychological thing it might not be a physical thing.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ Abuse covers everything doesn't it.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ You feel empathy but you can see that she's come out of the other end. She's talking about something that's happened in the past. It's not now, so that makes a difference.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ I know Women's Aid and My Cheshire Without Abuse are dropping the whole violence, so they will only say now domestic abuse. Because what they want to do is promote that as the umbrella of everything. It's not just violence.

~ **Female survivor**

“ So, violence is coming underneath the domestic abuse, everything's coming under that umbrella. What has happened is people have ignored and not understood all the other areas of abuse, so they are trying to abolish the domestic violence world.

~ **Female survivor**

“ To me, domestic abuse is mental abuse, whereas domestic violence, there's actual physical violence there.

~ **Female survivor**

“ Because there's that thing, 'Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt me.' That's a lie. That is the complete opposite. It doesn't work like that. The physical thing it's just the instant, and it's the, 'Ouch,' and then, 'Sorry, but-, ' but when someone is on at you and, picks on your insecurities, it last for a long time, that lasts.

~ **Female survivor**



## Quotes: DA or DV cont.

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“ I had a really severe broken bone, he'd fractured my femur, which is extremely hard to break. But, actually I could deal with that, as horrendous as it was, the psychological stuff is far worse.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ A huge part of domestic abuse is gaslighting, coercive control and psychological manipulation and the fear.  
~ **Expert**

“ It should just be abuse because one of the other storylines (Big Little Lies) is obviously horrific as well, so even just headline it abuse because that's what it is. Yes, it's in their household but actually abuse probably would cover it.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Yes, but that's why replacing that one word is so important, because it's not just violence.  
~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Always in ratings information

““

I think there needs to be a warning because anybody could watch it and may not deal with it well.

~ **Female survivor**

““

So, again, on an educational side of things it should say domestic abuse.

~ **Female survivor**

““

Could set you back weeks just watching something like that. Like for me I'm doing EMDR therapy at the moment, trauma therapy and things.

~ **Female survivor**

““

Yes, because everyone seems to take on board now strong violence and drugs, but domestic abuse is still swept under the carpet.

~ **Female survivor**

““

I just put on for example Coronation Street or EastEnders, which I don't watch but support groups have said this, again I'm only speaking on behalf of them, but they've said that they can't watch it. They're expecting to see things about other characters, and then they just don't want to watch it. They're not warned about it before it comes on, so they have no choice.

~ **Female survivor**

““

I think they need to break up their terminologies a bit more and get into it more, understand what domestic abuse is. So, for example they could break it up and they could put 'scenes of gaslighting'. I think that that's better scenes, or 'scenes of psychological abuse' or 'brief scenes' actually put those key words in. I think the more that they did that it would expose and highlight abuse.

~ **Female survivor**

““

It does really affect some of them within the groups, so I think there is that side of things, so if someone goes to the movies or they want to rent something on Netflix I think they should at least have the option.

~ **Female survivor**

““

I don't expect to be wrapped in cotton wool the whole of my life, but I think like you say, I'd like to be warned in advance.

~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Always in ratings information

“ You’ve got to be a bit sensitive, I suppose, you know, to people’s experience.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ If you’ve been affected by scenes of domestic abuse, here’s the number. It says at the end, it doesn’t tell you in the beginning.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Domestic abuse is a very important part and you’d expect it to be in the ratings information. Times are changing and important that domestic abuse is shown to be a very specific thing.  
~ **Expert**

“ I think that it’s, like, when you watch certain episodes of *Emmerdale* and *EastEnders*, it would give you that warning, ‘some viewers may find some scenes upsetting’.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Because you sometimes hear them don’t you, they say before it comes on there’s going to be some strong scenes of violence. They could say there’s going to be some strong scenes of domestic abuse before it comes on, which would help many women. Because some of them sit down for their cup of tea or for their food, I can only speak for the women because I’ve not had any male survivors say this, but it really does impact them.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It is very helpful though before the film starts to have some sort of summary with the classification so that you have some warning – you never know what can be triggering so for survivors that’s very important.  
~ **Expert**

“ Because in some things, I’m thinking about when they do flashing images and stuff, for people that suffer with epilepsy, they say ‘flashing images throughout’. So, why shouldn’t they say ‘domestic abuse throughout’?  
~ **Expert**

“ Because if some people have gone through that mentally, and they watch that film and it brings back certain things. If they’ve read that there’s going to be domestic violence in there, they might think twice about watching it. Where if it’s just violence, it could just be a fight, or something else.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Yes, it might be a trigger for people, it might be something that takes them to a really dark place. I think it’s quite important. You don’t know really, you could be just coming out the other end and it could drag them back.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Attempts to define or quantify domestic abuse met with a **confused & even angry** response

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### “Theme”

Not well understood  
Somehow **trivialises  
the issue**

### “Domestic Violence”

Shows a **lack of  
understanding** of  
**complexity of issues**

### “References”

Can work for  
**documentaries** but on  
the whole, ‘**domestic  
abuse**’ covers this

### “Scenes of”

**More acceptable** (*but  
one scene can still  
trigger*)



## Whilst ‘domestic abuse’ lies at the core of ratings information, other descriptions can be helpful

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“Sustained threat”

Conveys **intensity and fear** (*key somatic markers*)

“Strong violence”

**Needs highlighting**, as visceral cues can be triggering

**NOT**  
“Child abuse”

Framed by all as **sexual in nature**

“

Yes, but people don’t think of that. When you say ‘child abuse’ people think that is someone touching a child, not emotional abuse or neglect.

~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Child abuse?

“ I think what I find upsetting and it's horrible saying this and I'm sure I could put it better, but I always think, monkey see, monkey do. And that always makes me concerned because children are so impressionable and I think you go one way or another, don't you?  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ No, because there's so many forms of child abuse - We just always think of that one, whereas there's so many.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I'd think it would be of a sexual nature.  
~ **Woman, General public**

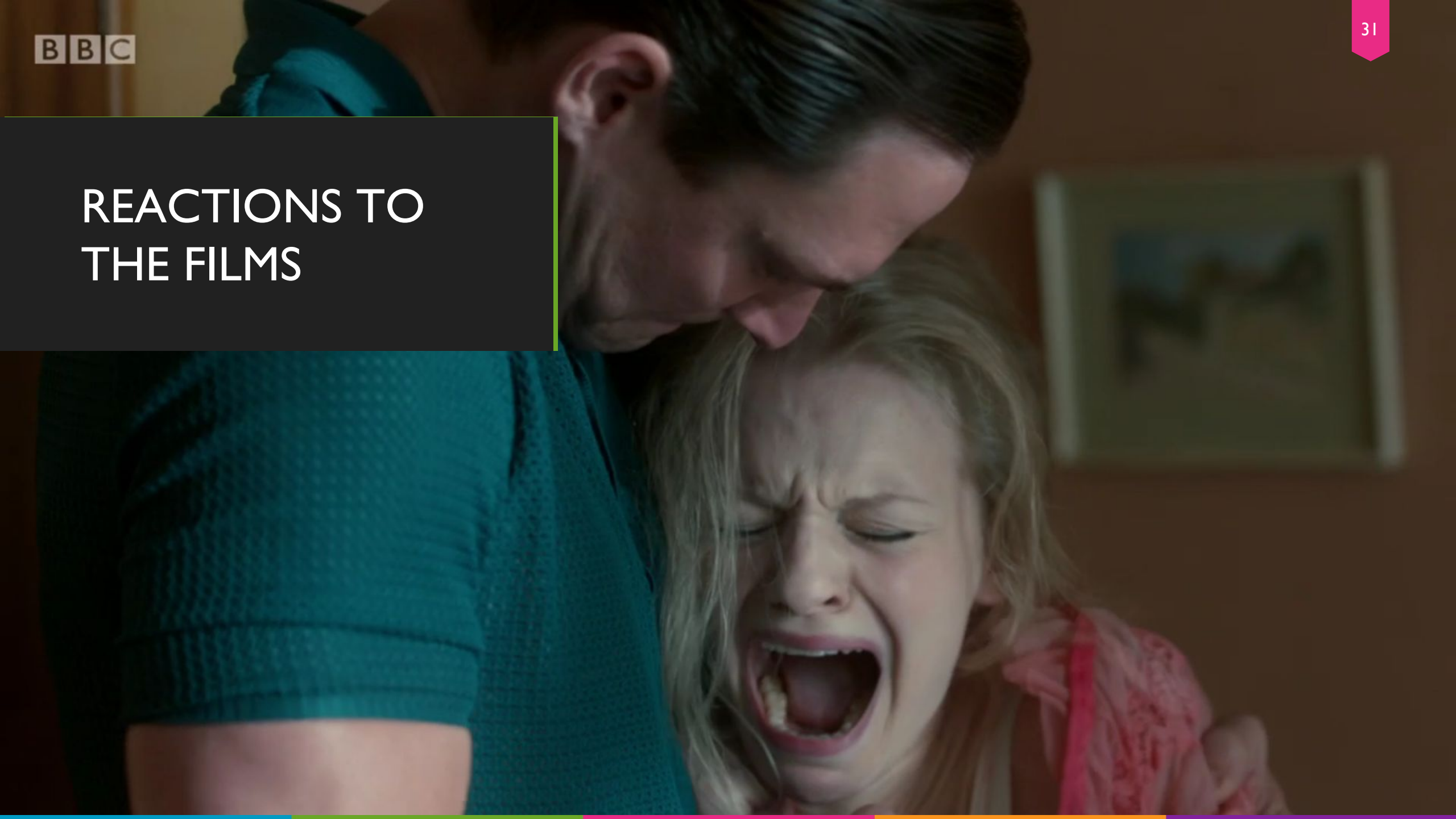
“ I would be wary of using child abuse, people may anticipate that to be of a sexual nature. Very hardcore child abuse. Paedophilia, things like that.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Child abuse, again, you think of something more sexual in nature.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ That's only because we've been educated on abuse, and everything reported. Child abuse is typically sexual abuse.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ No because the depiction of child abuse is sexual on the big screen. Depiction of domestic abuse is physical on the big screen. It's, like, even though we know that there's these other avenues of it, this is what we're mainly told.  
~ **Female survivor**

# REACTIONS TO THE FILMS



## *Murdered By My Boyfriend* elicited **very strong** responses



15

**STRONG VIOLENCE, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THEME, STRONG LANGUAGE, SEX**

- **Agreement with classification** because of level of violence and sexual content
- Domestic violence theme **disliked**:
  - Domestic abuse works better
- Evoked **strong visceral response**, tapping into somatic markers:
  - Level of abuse and sustained threat
  - Coercive control and nuanced abuse
  - Inevitability of outcome
  - Realism, very relatable
- Many could see **educational value** and relevance to teen audience
  - Argument for showing it in schools to early teens



## Murdered By My Boyfriend: Answers to specific BBFC questions

### TV AUDIENCE



Potential to be 'caught out' by **unexpected content**, however on this occasion the title (*and opening scenes*) provided a fair warning

15



### CHILD IN FINAL SEQUENCE, IMPACT ON RATINGS INFORMATION



Noted **presence of child** (*and enhances impact*), however **not a ratings information issue**

### 'STRONG VIOLENCE & DOMESTIC ABUSE'



**Covers the issues** in this film; strong violence is recommended:

- Violence did not need to be seen in final scene to feel strong

Domestic abuse covers sustained and multiple instances

“

It's short, it's not a whole movie to lose yourself in, with a movie you're watching it for entertainment and you don't take it quite as seriously but with this you are more focussed, concentrating and the message comes across more powerfully and you may lose that with a movie.

~ **Male survivor**

## Quotes: Films – *Murdered by My Boyfriend* (15)

“ I’d have given it 15, only because my kids are 18 and 20. They know what I’ve gone through, so I’d want them to see it.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ You know, I saw a lot of myself in Ashley, the main character, because I was 17 when I met my ex-partner, and I fell pregnant within a couple of months. And then, when I was pregnant, that’s when the abuse started.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It was just heartbreaking. The child could, or will, grow up without its mother, and mine could have done.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Well, it’s not a theme, is it? If you think through it, it’s real life. ~ **Female survivor**

“ It also highlights how sometimes, having a child together doesn’t stop anything. Because I thought it would stop when the baby is here. You know, it’s going to make us a family. This big illusion. A fairy-tale, kind of. Yes, but nothing’s going to make them change. A leopard never changes its spots.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I think it hurts more because it’s real and you know it happens.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It’s difficult, isn’t it? Because I feel like there was a balance in *I, Tonya*, whereas *Murdered By My Boyfriend*, it’s a constant theme, there’s a lot of tension. You just didn’t take your eyes off the screen, and you were just like glued to it.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I sent it to Cheshire and Merseyside Constabulary, because I work a lot with them. And I think it’s really good for them to see. You know, and they’re on first response, how they don’t see how it is really.  
~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Films – *Murdered by My Boyfriend* (15) cont.

“ Because it’s the swearing, the violence, the sex scene, the whole package, an 18.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I would say 15 only because there’s young girls that are going through things like that and they should see it.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It should be a 15 because I think it’s an education tool for young girls.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It’s not really a theme, is it? It’s about domestic violence. Full stop.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ I think the worst part of that was the end of it where he killed her with an ironing board and smashed her head in. I thought that was very graphic, so I think 15’s definitely too low. It should be an 18.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ The *Murdered by My Boyfriend* stays with me more because it actually happened. I thought about it since. I mean, I read about it afterwards as well so it didn’t do myself any favours because I’ve read the article about the actual thing. But it’s just that I couldn’t believe that it actually happened. So, I think if it’s real, it does affect you more.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I would really want 15 year-old girls to watch that because she got involved with this boy when she was 16, 17. So, it’s a documentary to try and teach people really about abuse in young relationships.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ I think you can even make it stronger than that. Serious violence. He killed her in the end, didn’t he?  
~ **Man, General public**

## Quotes: Films – *Murdered by My Boyfriend* (15) cont.

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“ There isn't really a difference between domestic violence and domestic abuse.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ I think it hurts more because it's real and you know it happens.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Even though you could see from behind the ironing board you didn't actually see him hitting her and there was no sign of blood so it wasn't that graphic. It's depicted in your head and you're imagining what she looked like on the floor injured and covered in blood but you don't actually see it and that's why I think it's been classified a 15.  
~ **Expert**

“ 15 is good – she does say that when she gets pregnant and he's telling her he loves her and he's trapping her which is a classic example of how things happen.  
~ **Male survivor**

“ The prolonged violence and the way he uses a domestic item which is so well linked to a woman and had he stopped but then he went back with an ironing board which is even worse. We can't get away from the reality and it felt hard for a 15.  
~ **Expert**

“ I think it's good that it's a 15 because she was only 17 herself when it all started and that's important because in my job I've heard that same storyline time and time and time again from very young women, 15 and 16 year olds.  
~ **Expert**



## *Custody* was felt to capture the threat & impact of domestic abuse



STRONG THREAT, LANGUAGE,  
DOMESTIC ABUSE THEME



Rating, strong threat



“Theme”



You don't see it but you can feel it all, though.

~ **Female survivor**

Impactful, full of **somatic markers**:

- Focus on child's view
- Realism
- Relentlessness of threat and build up
- Complexity of issues
- Sense of long term trauma
- Final scene and gun



You can tell that the mother is scared to death of him, mentally and physically, but psychological abuse will impact on the child. It was quite hard to watch.

~ **Female survivor**

## Custody: Answers to specific BBFC questions

IMPACT OF  
POWER  
IMBALANCE



Noted and **particularly relevant**

CREDIBLE CHILD  
ACTOR & RATINGS  
INFO



**Not a ratings info issue**, contributed to sense of realism and highlighted emotions of viewers

IMPLIED THREAT,  
MENTAL THREAT



Very powerful but **covered in 'domestic abuse' ratings info** (*psychological threat / abuse vs. mental*)



## Quotes: Films – *Custody* (15)

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“ It was very suggestive, wasn't it? So, from the start, we knew there were issues. So, the suggestions of issues, and we also knew there was an undercurrent of aggression and violence. ~ **Woman, General public**

“ I totally feel everything she went through, and I felt for the boy in it, I just felt like the violence wasn't really there, apart from the ending where he's knocking on the door, booting it down with the gun.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It's the level of fear that child was feeling. It was so well-acted, the boy was so realistic that you just felt for him more than any of the characters in it.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I think for people who have experienced it, that tension was building because we knew it was coming.  
~ **Female, General public**

“ 15. Because of the gun and because of the child. That really got to me, that.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Films – *Custody* (15) cont.

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“ With the child involved it's heartbreaking and the child actor was brilliant. When he hit the car above his head and you know he can hit you and that's enough, he doesn't ever have to hit you, my heart is racing talking about the film.  
~ Expert

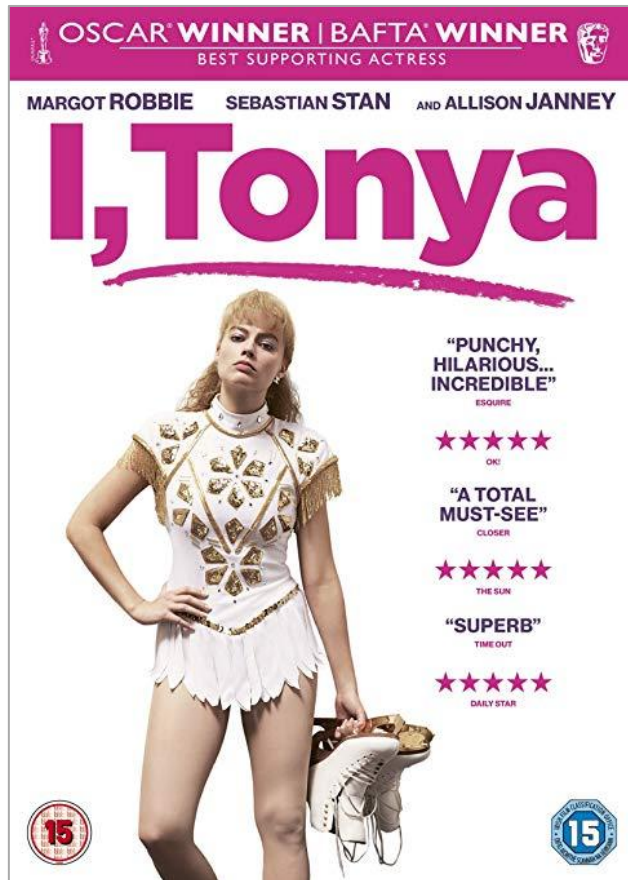
“ Realism, sense of realism would be more triggering. It was a very slow storyline with not much going on but focussing all the time on post separation abuse and child abuse. Using the child as a weapon and using the child as a spy because he didn't know where the mum had moved to but basically frightened his son enough so that he told him. And the final scene where he was shooting through the door and hiding in the bath was oh so realistic - I thought it was fantastic.  
~ Expert

“ Subtle cues and manipulation- there was loads in that film - the worst when he was hugging and crying and the manipulation the victim guilt tripping and with the daughter offering her something of monetary value - all about power and control and how important he is, hard to watch and there was a lot there.  
~ Expert

“ Very real in real life and using the family courts system and the children. And the lack of understanding from other professionals which is something in my organisation we come across time and time again - saying well he's the father and he should be having contact - rather than listening to what the child is saying and how scared he is of his dad and asking why is this. They don't tend to listen to it.  
~ Expert



## The domestic abuse in the film *I, Tonya* was mixed with other issues



15

VERY STRONG LANGUAGE, SCENES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Ratings



'Scenes of...' - again 'Domestic abuse' covers this, especially mother to child abuse (*which was upsetting*)

Whilst domestic abuse is not the focus,  
**it is still present:**

- 'Carried' by the tone of the film, themes and ending

## *I, Tonya*: Answers to specific BBFC questions

DYNAMIC BETWEEN  
COUPLE... IMPACT ON  
RATINGS



Still seen as **domestic abuse**

DARK, COMIC TONE =  
MITIGATOR



Frames the domestic abuse but **does not mitigate** – still abuse

- When probed, provoked strong responses; domestic abuse is never funny

TRUE STORY

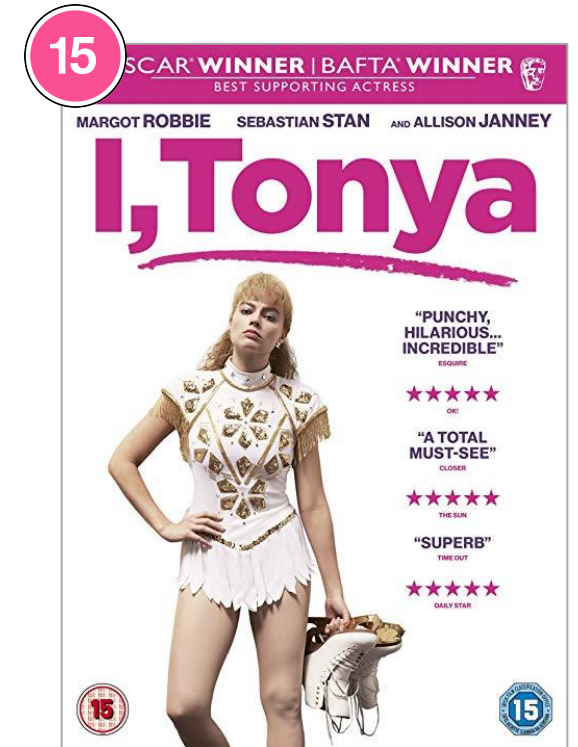


Can create a point of interest but **not a ratings issue**

PHYSICAL & MENTAL  
ABUSE



Again, 'Domestic abuse' covers this



## Quotes: Films – *I, Tonya* (15)

“ Heart-breaking, yes.  
Because that’s all she’s  
been shown by her mum.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It is making light of it,  
but he absolutely  
whacked her though.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ There’s nothing  
funny about it, no.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I’d seen it as more, like, I’d  
let my son watch a boxing  
film if it was like that.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ On *I, Tonya* though, because she was always hitting  
him, he was always hitting her, I almost became used  
to the violence, so it wasn’t really affecting me. I  
don’t know if anyone else felt like that, but it’s still  
wrong, and I’ve kept it at 15 then.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I can’t believe I’m going to say that  
but it was almost like a milder  
version of abuse. It was just a slap  
or a punch. It was one hit and that  
was it.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ Well, I think why I gave  
it a 15, again, every  
other word was ‘F’.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ The level of the actual abuse, it wasn’t  
like *Murdered By My Boyfriend* when he  
walked in the shop and he headbutted  
her and started beating the shit out of  
her, yes. It was just a bit of a slap here or  
there.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ I also thought there was a much  
happier message in that film that  
was more uplifting, whereas  
*Murdered By My Boyfriend* and to a  
lesser extent, *Minding the Gap*,  
were very dark.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ Comedy. That lifted it for me where I  
didn’t even really think too much  
about the abuse or the domestic  
violence. It was more the whole thing  
watching it all the way through was a  
bit of a joke.  
~ **Man, General public**

## Quotes: Films – *I, Tonya* (15) cont.

“ I thought this represented more of a struggle, whereas the other films are more about abuse.

~ **Man, General public**

“ I just think with that, like everyone's saying, it wasn't as serious. If your children were watching that, you'd probably feel a bit more comfortable. Whereas like you were saying before, the other one, I wouldn't think I'd feel comfortable with children watching that one because of how graphic it was. Whereas that one doesn't really feel like that. You felt like you'd still be getting the message but you wouldn't be as affected by it.

~ **Man, General public**

“ The bit that shocked me was the fact that they made it almost comedic. I think if you've got a much younger child, they would see that as minimising the violence.

~ **Female survivor**

“ Just like her mum was, in an abusive relationship and was abusive to her daughter, she was just repeating the pattern which is just really sad.

~ **Man, General public**

“ I think for me the difference is when Tom pushes a piano off the cliff onto a mouse, that's fine because that's not real. This is a very real situation with a real person. He was a real person, and that is a situation that's going on in one in every four households.

~ **Female survivor**

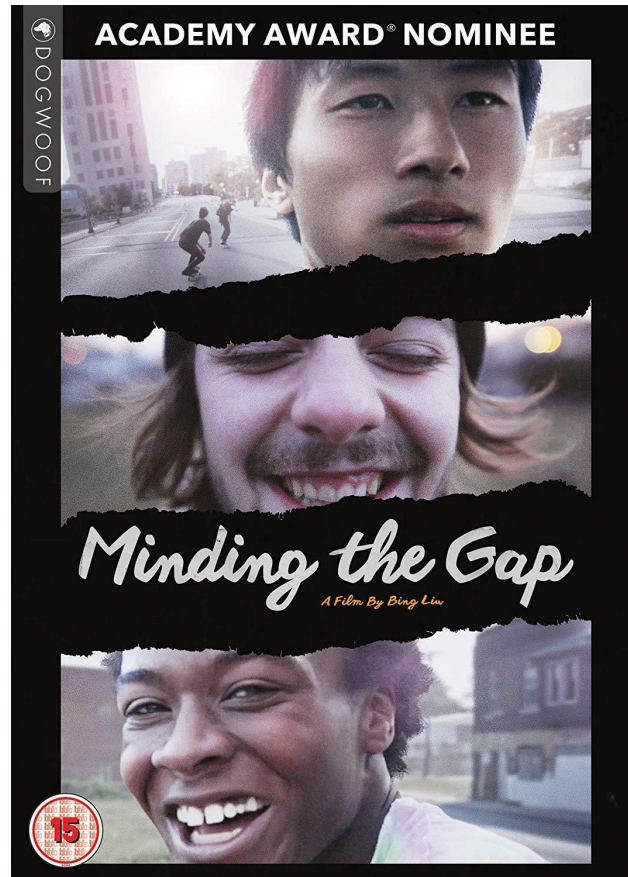
“ So, it's definitely not funny, but I can understand it being dark humour, and I didn't find the acts of violence funny.

~ **Female survivor**

“ Do you know the thing that got me, on the front of the box it's got a critic comment you know when they put the little four stars-, and it says 'punchy, hilarious'. I thought that was disgusting.

~ **Female survivor**

In *Minding the Gap*, the domestic abuse was **subsumed by other issues**



15

STRONG LANGUAGE, DRUG MISUSE,  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REFERENCES



Strong language, drug misuse



“Domestic violence references”; worked well for those who understood film (*minority*)

**Niche** audience anticipated

Domestic abuse **is there** (*but often lost amongst other issues*)

- Derogatory comments about women often noted and disliked



## Minding the Gap: Answers to specific BBFC questions

VERBAL VS VISUAL  
REFERENCES



Yes, in this film as reported in **matter of fact** way

- Easily missed

DOCUMENTARY  
CONTEXT MAKES  
A DIFFERENCE?



Not in this instance (*as felt like a story*)

- Has potential to **feel strong**

HISTORIC ABUSE,  
NEED TO BE  
QUALIFIED

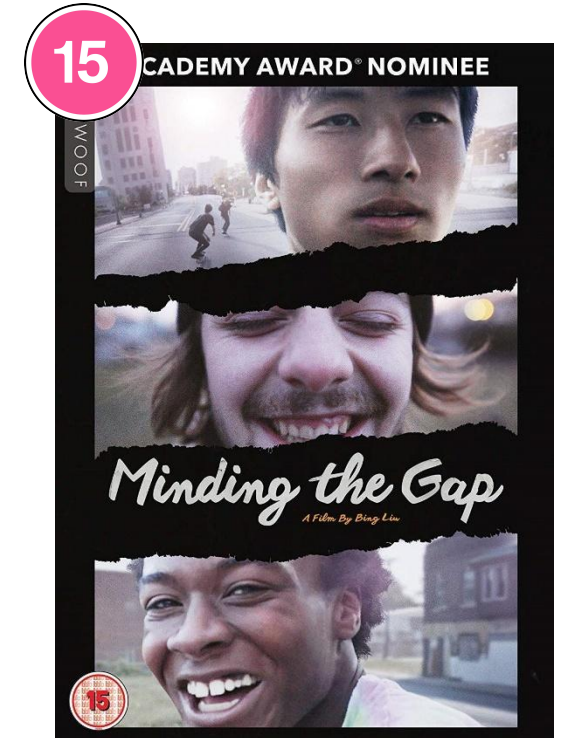


Not a ratings info issue but did further **diminish impact** of abuse

CHILD/TEEN  
INVOLVED



Impacts the story, but again, **not a ratings issue**



## Quotes: Films – *Minding the Gap* (15)

“

Twelve because of the drugs, because there was a lot of drugs use in it.

~ **Woman, General public**

“

I think emotional abuse is a lot worse than, you know. God forbid, I wouldn't want a smack in the mouth, but emotional abuse is shocking and I think that is sometimes worse.

~ **Woman, General public**

“

They were talking about it. You didn't see anything.

~ **Man, General public**

“

When you see something, it's more powerful than when you hear about it. It doesn't take away the issue. It just becomes more real, powerful.

~ **Man, General public**

“

For that film, they were children. So, when you see it and they're older, and they're recalling it, if you're actually seeing it involving a child, that's totally different. I know it's bad, but they're older and they've overcome it and they've found something to help them.

~ **Woman, General public**

“

So, it's graphic in nature of what it's talking about but again, there's no pictures or scenes. It is graphic the way they are talking about it.

~ **Man, General public**

“

I thought it was quite a distressing storyline, how they were reminiscing about what happened to them when they were kids and all that but I have to agree with what everyone else said, you didn't see anything.

~ **Man, General public**

“

It doesn't change the classification. It doesn't for me. When it's real or whether it's just a movie, whether it's a documentary or it's a movie, what's being portrayed and what's being referenced is an issue.

~ **Man, General public**

## Quotes: Films – *Minding the Gap* (15) cont.

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“ You don’t see all the nuts and bolts of it. We know, as adults, that those children probably bed-wetted, didn’t do as well in school, there’s all those other elements that you’re not party to. You’re seeing them band together, talk things through, work through it.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ It wasn’t at the forefront or the theme, it was the skateboards and the camaraderie, the how do we get through it, every now and again you’re reminded that it was domestic violence in this.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ I felt the discussion of the historical abuse was impactful and the discussion with his mum of child abuse would be triggering for people so a 15.

~ **Expert**

“ It covered the perpetrator’s point of view and I liked their reasoning behind their behaviour - you should never hit a woman but if she’s coming at you then she deserves a slap! Quite impactful to hear his views and why he did it.

~ **Expert**

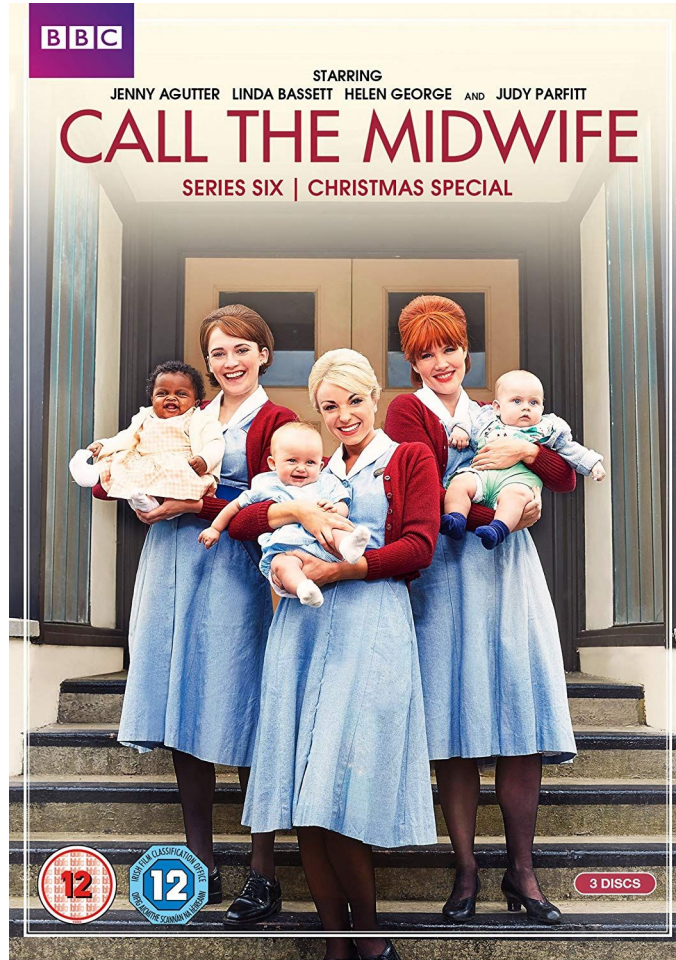
“ There was a moment talking about his brother’s bedroom and all the violence that had happened and I thought it peaked at 15 suitability just there, because it was quite graphic and it was impactful. But otherwise pretty low key and could be okay as a 12, but from a domestic abuse perspective that was hard.

~ **Expert**

“ Some weed and some swearing but nothing more than you might see on *EastEnders* or *Coronation Street*.

~ **Male survivor**

## Call The Midwife - domestic abuse issues subsumed by overall imagery & tone



12

SCENES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,  
MODERATE THREAT, INJURY DETAIL



Spot on, but “abuse” better

A few scenes dealt with sensitively, **positive outcome**, historical context, familiar series

## Call the Midwife: Answers to specific BBFC questions

PRESENCE OF  
THE CHILD

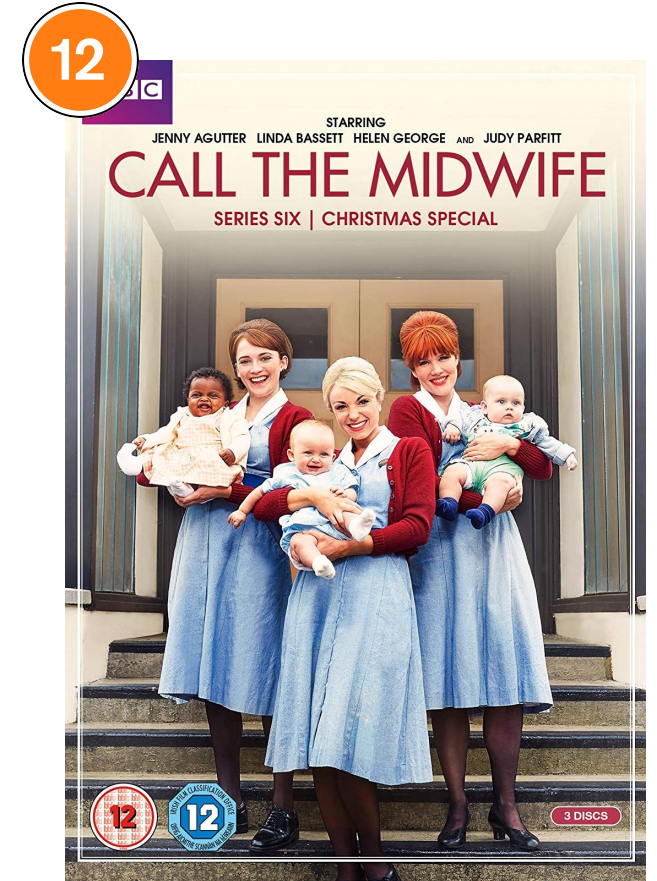


Again, noted & **enhances impact** but not relevant to ratings info

HISTORICAL CONTEXT



Mitigates in this work, mainly due to **positive outcome**





## Quotes: Films – *Call the Midwife* (I2/PG)

“ I always get this warm feeling when I watch *Call The Midwife* because I love it.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ There are huge elements that are really hard-hitting but it's portrayed in a much softer way. It's more humour. Not around those issues, but humour sandwiched around it.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ So many elements of it. It was just slight scenes of domestic violence that hasn't got the violence.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It was kind of more of a man's world. I think because it was in the 40s, 50s. You could hit your wife, you were allowed to. Because it was the norm.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I think what's very different, as well, is how they dealt with it back in the 50s, with the police and the nurses, different to how it would have been dealt with now.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It's like a Corrie scene isn't it, really?  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ You know it's all going to come good, and I think that's more childlike, isn't it?  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I thought it was very old school - it's going to sound weird but the *Murdered By My Boyfriend*, it was more of a modern way of abuse. That was an old school abuse.

“ It wasn't a part of the whole story. It was just a minor storyline to it.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Films – *Call the Midwife* (PG/12) cont.

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“ Yes, but that shouldn't affect the classification, should it? Whether it's the 1950's or now.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It was good showing how she was a survivor and I think 12 is fine. The cigarette was a bit urgh but okay.  
~ **Expert**

“ We're classifying it for 2019 or 2020, not in the 1960's.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ 12 seems appropriate, nicely packaged storyline, did get into complexity of counter allegations and property issues. And you do see that and saying things like “Oh he's your husband'. That theme is quite strong with families turning away from the survivor and withdrawing support.  
~ **Expert**

“ As long as there's a resolution at the end, and it's not just showing her going back with her abuser. Then you forget about it, and next week we move onto something else. As long as there's a positive resolution to it I'm fine with it.  
~ **Female survivor**

A man and a woman are sitting on a dark couch in a room with a textured wall and abstract art. The woman, on the left, has dark hair and is wearing a white tank top. The man, on the right, has blonde hair and is wearing a dark t-shirt with his arms crossed. A dark grey bag is behind them. A dark grey semi-transparent box with white text is in the bottom left corner.

## LEARNING FROM THE CLIPS

# What makes domestic abuse harder to view?

## I. REALISM (*THE POLICE OFFICER'S WIFE, FUNNY COW*)



**Everyday** settings

**Normal** imagery

How subject is handled; **secrecy**,  
**powerlessness**, **coercive**  
**control**

Production values, British,  
**cinematography**,  
contemporary



Sense of '**could**  
**happen**' and '**did**  
**happen to me**'

Taps into **somatic**  
**markers**

Creates **empathy**



The violence was realistic and felt very real, he was in her face, it wasn't just the physical violence it was the control and fear. He was leaning over her in the bed, it was very intimidating the shouting and aggression and with her back to him.

~ **Expert**

## Quotes: Real, everyday

---

“

A lot of things are American and that can make things harder to relate to, or easier to distance yourself from, but that was a young girl over here and people can relate to that and that makes it more effective.

~ **Male survivor**

“

It does make a difference if they portray it as everyday and you do get these things happening – and if it seems to be portraying everyday life it does hit home. It's there all the time, everyday, is she going to start - your phone goes and the texts start and it can happen at anytime if you're at the supermarket, at a wedding anytime and that becomes the norm.

~ **Male survivor**



# What makes domestic abuse harder to view?

## 2. CONSTANT THREAT (SERENITY)



No emotional  
**let up**  
Again, **realistic**



Appreciate **psychology**  
**of abuse:**

Never-ending both during  
and after

Viewers **feel the threat**  
and it can **stay with**  
**them**



It's not even the violence  
it's the strong threat, the  
possibility that any minute,  
something could happen.

~ **Women, General public**



It's emotional abuse, that  
one, isn't it really, rather  
than seeing actual physical  
abuse.

~ **Female survivor**

# What makes domestic abuse harder to view?

## 3. LEVEL OF DETAIL (A VIGILANTE, THE KITCHEN)



Level of detail is key:

**Visual**  
**Auditory**  
**Behavioural**  
**How reported**

= Impact on victims  
is also relevant



Domestic abuse  
doesn't **need to be  
seen to be felt**

Especially for survivors

“

I think it's obviously you're not witnessing it, but you're hearing it and it's the imagery and the detailed description of what she has been through. So, I would say it would have to be someone with the understanding of domestic abuse to take on board.

~ **Female survivor**

# What makes domestic abuse harder to view?

## 4. PRESENCE OF CHILDREN (*FUNNY COW, HAUNTED, THE SHACK, A VIGILANTE*)



Evokes a **strong response**:

Protective role  
& innocence of child  
Cycle of abuse and longer  
term damage

However, **not a ratings  
information issue** and covered  
by domestic abuse



Can tap into  
**survivors' guilt**  
and promote  
strong feelings



I think the violence towards a child  
gives it a bit more seriousness. It  
would be different if it was violence  
against an adult woman maybe.

~ **Man, General public**



That's why I found it so upsetting, I  
think having kids as well, I just  
thought oh my God, because of  
what you've seen you think that's  
okay.

~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Seeing child

“ Like, I still have guilt that my kids had to go through it, and I still have a lot of guilt there so watching *Custody* was difficult.

~ **Female survivor**

“ That will stay with that little girl. Even though she was so young, she will remember that because she went into her room and cried. She didn't go oh, like they're playing or whatever, she knew exactly what was happening

~ **Woman, General public**

“ 15, the child is irrelevant to the whole classification, in my view.

~ **Male, General public**

“ The thing I found the worst is when the mum's hitting her with her hairbrush. You can deal with it when it's an adult, but when you're seeing a child being hurt it's so much more difficult.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ That's the bit I found most shocking it was the fact the mother was so cruel, not only physically but mentally just the whole time. It shocked me like when she wouldn't let her go to the toilet and she wet herself.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ I think it mentally affects the child when they've seen their parents verbally and physically abusing each other.

~ **Female survivor**

“ It's the little boy, and even where there wasn't any violence, before the dad did anything you just were waiting and the little boy's face, it was awful. He was just terrified the whole way through, and then at the end when it all blows up, it was awful.

~ **Woman, General public**

“ I've been in that position too – I'm a product of social care in and out of services till the age of 18 and when you witness your mum taking a beating the child is suffering emotional abuse as well. Then the child thinks that it's acceptable as well.

~ **Male survivor**

# What makes domestic abuse harder to view?

## 5. SUSTAINED DOMESTIC ABUSE (*POLICE OFFICER'S WIFE, BIG LITTLE LIES*)



As with sustained threat, **can be very impactful:**

Needs flagging in terms of ratings info – domestic abuse upfront warning

Versus **'one scene'** – which can be lost



Really resonates with survivors; **matches their experiences**

One scene for survivors, however, **can be a trigger**



This was their daily routine, day in and day out and that's what abuse is with the cycle continuing going on and on. It's the psychological thing and you know it's going to happen but just when?

~ **Male survivor**



**Survivors** in particular, were **against the concept of mitigators** however there were **aspects of content that reduced the overall impact**



## Quotes: Reducing the impact

“ Also the storyline was about her career (*I, Tonya*) so it was focused between the 2, so you had a bit of relief when it was focused on that. It wasn't so intense.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ There was slight comedy as well (*I, Tonya*), the way they spoke in the interviews and that made it a bit lighter.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It didn't make me as upset as the others, I don't know if that's because I know what *Call the Midwife* is about and it's set back in time, so it wasn't as relatable.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ The comedic tone in *I, Tonya* you absolutely needed that otherwise the film would be so dark and too hard going.  
~ **Male survivor**

“ It's an easier watch because you see that transition from going through the abuse to being given the option to start life again.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ But I found it empowering because at the time that would have been really hard, to get a divorce. I found the fact she was a strong character easier in a way, she was trying to improve life for her kids. Because it was a happier ending it was an easier watch, you didn't come out traumatised.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It makes me feel very sad for her. (*A Vigilante*) I wouldn't say it affected me in the way that I was sitting there like, as you're watching it. I just felt really sad for her. I don't think it's as upsetting than actually watching it happen.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I just think it wasn't as heavy as the other ones. There was the cigarette burns, but that was the only one bit for me.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ You feel empathy but you can see that she's come out of the other end. She's talking about something that's happened in the past. It's not now, so that makes a difference.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Positive outcome?

---

“ When do you know anyone who’s been through domestic violence and it’s a happy ending? Never.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I think, if you don’t, then you could have someone who’s suffered it who just wants to watch a normal film and then it comes up.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Because it’s still mental. It still leaves a mental scar.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Yes, you’ve got to identify anything that might be unwanted. Because someone who’s been the victim of domestic violence might not want to watch it  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Historical?

---

“

It is a historical context but the thing is things haven't changed a lot and that can still happen to anyone.

~ **Expert**

“

Abuse is abuse even if it's historical back in the day – it doesn't mean that it was okay to be doing that just because it went on back in the day and you can still feel the abuse.

~ **Male survivor**

## Specific clips are worthy of further discussion



### GIRL ON THE TRAIN

Tapped into real concerns about **gaslighting**

'Domestic abuse' covers this



### FUNNY COW

Portrayal of **cycle of domestic abuse** (not mitigated by historic)

Strong **psychological** abuse



### SERENITY

Seeing her fear was powerful:

- Real sense of **hopelessness**
- Did not need to see violence to feel abuse



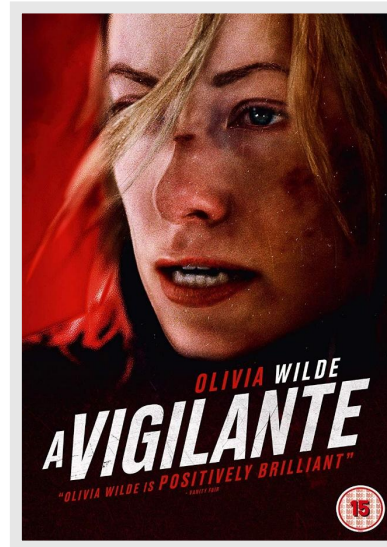
## Specific clips are wanting of further discussion



### BIG LITTLE LIES

Communicated long term psychological impact; **in her head** & complexities of abuse

Domestic abuse **should be included** in ratings info



### A VIGILANTE

Nuanced and well-acted, **resonated with survivors** in particular

Distress of victims noted



### THE POLICE OFFICER'S WIFE

The apparent suffering and remorse **did not mitigate** (but felt very real)

A close-up photograph of two women of African descent smiling and talking outdoors. The woman on the left is seen in profile, wearing glasses and a patterned top. The woman on the right is facing slightly towards the camera, wearing glasses, a black top, and a blue beaded necklace. The background is blurred, showing an outdoor setting with a red roof.

## WOMEN'S AID ADVERTS

## Women's Aid adverts: Well received, good concept

women's aid



Important to **create awareness** and understanding



Welcome the **widest distribution** possible

- Keep classification as low as possible



However, do recognise the potential to **trigger and upset** unbidden audiences





## Quotes: Women's Aid ads

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“ Yes, especially as kids I guess, and on a widescreen, it's quite hardcore isn't it?  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Some kids would get really upset at seeing that wouldn't they, if they weren't expecting it.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Would that come up, like say if you took your children to see a PG movie?  
~ **Female survivor**

“ And she needs to be aware of it. It's not in our life, but there are people who suffer through this and she has to open her eyes to the world.  
~ **Female survivor**

## *The Unedited Truth* (2018) researched incredibly well

- Hard hitting without the detail
- Clever & contemporary, cycle of abuse is an important issue
- Impactful

12A



The impact of it, the kid being there, you don't see it, but it allows you to create a picture in your head of the violence.

~ Female survivor



Of all the ads this is very powerful and the message really hits you. There is nothing gratuitous in there.

~ Male survivor



12 or possibly 15 but there's nothing there, no swearing, violence, and it's all innuendo and you're filling in the gaps in your head.

~ Male survivor





## *Cut* (2009) was a **less successful execution**

- **15** ✓✓✓ Violent, difficult to view
- Too convoluted, needed too much decoding, glamorised (*Keira Knightley*)
- Not 'real' enough
- Whilst 15 rating was felt to be correct, disappointment as limits the educational scope of message

“

No, because it would put an absolute downer, if you were twelve years old, I think it would make you upset, yes.

~ **Female survivor**

”

And I think we should be educating, there should be an element of education through educating children around these issues and around what that even means through film and through media from twelve with parental guidance.

~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Women's Aid ads

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“ Because it was set in a home environment, you see your child, you see your Mum and you see things that happen every day.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ If it's borderline, just to answer that question, if it's borderline, then it means that quite a few people I would imagine are saying that this audience are suitable for that and quite a few are saying just this. So, if it's borderline I think it's more important to reach a broader audience with the message.  
~ **Women, General public**

“ I don't know why I said 15, it snipped out all the violence, so 12A.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ But definitely twelve because like you say people younger than 12 , can go through it and as well, I know like children that go to high school and they get a phone when first going to high school, that's ten, eleven and they can be going through domestic violence with their parents.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ 15 - You're actually seeing the violence.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It looked more normal.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Other adverts

### Stonewall Housing (2019)



- Light, **positive tone** was noted

### Police Scotland: 9 Minutes (2017)



- Could be **I2A**
- Most did not perceive **dark tone**
- Important message

### Police Scotland: Rape Prevention (2015)



- Borderline but on balance an important message at **I2A** (but would this work given unbidden nature?)

## Quotes: Scottish Police Ad

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“ The tone is fine and there's no image that would upset you - you either get that or you don't and if my 12 year old son had been sitting next to me I wouldn't have thought oh my god I wish he hadn't seen that and that would have been fine. No reason why it can't be a 12. The police officer isn't a victim so it lessens the violence.  
~ **Male survivor**


“ It definitely gets the message across and anyone can watch that advert.  
~ **Male survivor**

## Quotes: 9 Minutes Rape Ad

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“ They live in a world where they are seeing everything so much younger. They need to know about this and they start sex education so much younger and teach them earlier so a 12.  
~ **Male survivor**



A black and white photograph of a person with long hair, seen from behind, looking out of a window with horizontal bars. The person's right hand is resting on one of the bars. The window is divided into several panes by a grid of bars. The background outside the window is bright and out of focus, showing some architectural details. The overall mood is contemplative or somber.

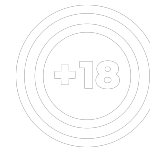
# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## Conclusions & Recommendations



**Domestic Abuse** is a current concern and the BBFC is **right** to explore this important issue

- Survivors, in particular, **appreciated the BBFC's interest**



“

I think it's really good. It shows us, kind of, how far we've come even though we've still got a long way to go in terms of society and the fact that they are considering it to be a very serious issue they need to look into is really impressive.

~ **Female survivor**

”

It's a step in the right direction. I'm glad that they're taking such care.

~ **Female survivor**



## Conclusions & Recommendations



On the whole, respondents **agreed with the BBFC's classification:**

- If anything they felt the BBFC was **rightly stricter** than them
- Occasionally this could restrict a work's **potential educational role**

## Conclusions & Recommendations

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The key finding is that domestic abuse is on the agenda and needs to be reflected in Ratings Information



Going into too much detail is a **minefield** *(as people's sensitivities and triggers are complex)*



Less is more – **'Domestic Abuse'** is to the point and is an adequate warning

**'Scenes of'** & **'verbal references'** could also be used

Likewise **'strong threat'** or **'strong violence'** can warn about the intensity of the abuse

## Conclusions & Recommendations

On the whole, as with sexual violence, **mitigators are few and far between**, yet the impact of domestic abuse can be lessened by *(a combination of)*:



**A lighter tone**



**Historical setting**



**Positive outcome**



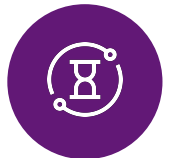
**Verbal, rather than visual detail**



**Familiarity**  
*(with works/genre)*



**Power balance**



**Infrequency**

There are **certain things** the BBFC needs to look out for going forwards:

**Impact on children, cycle of abuse**

**Realism; it could happen / it did happen**

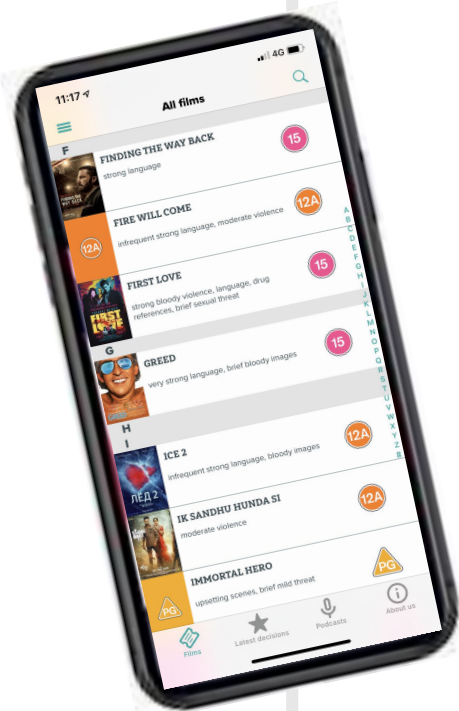
**A felt sense of the violence / somatic markers** *(noise, seeing victim's pain, gestures, not always visual)*

**Psychological abuse / coercive control**

**Sustained threat**

**When combined with other issues – sexual violence**

## Conclusions & Recommendations



As always there was **widespread interest in the BBFC app**; especially amongst survivors

- An opportunity to assess the level of personal triggers / **somatic markers**

Finally, there may be an opportunity for the bbfc to **educate the film industry / distribution**

- *I, Tonya* DVD 'punchy, hilarious' Esquire review was offensive to some survivors



# Quotes

## Quotes: “Theme”

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“ Well, it’s not really in the background of this film, it’s on a party or a kids party, and you’ve all got to dress up as something. That’s a theme, isn’t it?  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It’s like it’s not taken seriously.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I hate this ‘theme’, it’s getting on my nerves. It’s annoying me.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I don’t understand theme, just domestic violence throughout. It’s too light of a word. I wrote in my thing that it’s a bit of a fluffy word.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ This (*Police Officer’s Wife*) isn’t domestic violence theme – no! It’s domestic abuse and child abuse.  
~ **Male survivor**



## Quotes: “Reference”

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“ Because that sounds if, if you say ‘reference’, it’s like saying, ‘Oh well, the neighbour hit so and so, and it’s like you’re referring to something, it’s not in the context.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Think references is a good word if it's not a continued theme throughout it all. I haven't seen the other part but if that's a reference to it, then that's a perfect word.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: “Scenes”

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“ I think if you put scenes of, you're not waiting for one big event. I wouldn't be like, when's it going to happen? You think, throughout the whole thing, there's going to be a bit of violence here.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Humour

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“ I’ve never seen any comedies about domestic abuse, I don’t see how it’s funny though. It’s a juxtaposition isn’t it, it’s like a beautiful nightmare, how’s that.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Absolutely not. I just find it more disturbing (*Funny Cow*) because like you said, the way she talks to her dad, that’s how she’s seen her mum and dad be. To me, that’s just more disturbing that she’s been brought up like that’s really normal  
~ **Female survivor**

“ You can’t have a laugh out of domestic violence. It’s not funny. But I do accept, you can. I mean, like *Bad Boys*, it starts killing people from the beginning but it’s funny because that sort of not really real in a way, is it? Domestic violence is real.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: DA at the lower category

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“ If portrayed in an accessible way then possibly at PG. And telling him this isn't right, and not constant throughout the film.  
~ **Expert**

“ PG for *The Shack* could possibly be but there may be conversations to have.  
~ **Expert**

“ If everything else is fine in the film then yes absolutely. Kids are a lot cleverer than we give them credit for. PG is fine if it develops and is seen as inspiration for the rest of his life then it could be a PG.  
~ **Male survivor**

## Quotes: Clips – A Vigilante (15)

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“ Straightaway, you have images. It's there. Yes, that wasn't very nice. The rest of it, I don't know, you hear about the rest of it more, about women going back and things like that. Whereas the actual details of using a USB with a child that's really horrible.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It made us feel very serious but you didn't actually see anything. It changes our emotions but not the classification.  
~ **Man, General public**

“ Because you don't see anything. So, I think you could only relate to that if you have experienced it.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ 12 - I would have no problem my daughter watching that and discussing those issues with her in that context.  
~ **Woman, General public**



## Quotes: Clips – *The Kitchen* (15)

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“ Yes I5, I thought so, because the gunshot and the punches to the stomach, I thought, was quite extreme.  
~ Female survivor

“ And also, there's the use of guns as well. I think that moves up a gear, doesn't it.  
~ Female survivor

“ And it's intimidation, isn't it, as well? The way he is. It's not just the hitting, it's the kicks in the beginning as well.  
~ Female survivor

“ Even with that, if you didn't see it, but the noise... awful.  
~ Female survivor

“ That promotes mental abuse because it's her Achilles' heel, she lost a baby, you know.  
~ Woman, General public

## Quotes: Clips – The *Kitchen* (15) cont.

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“ Strong language. Scenes of domestic violence and murder, but that does not make it an 18.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Yes, it was like, what was he going to do? I mean that brought him to his senses, but you don't know do you.  
~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Clips - *Girl on a Train* (15)

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“ I think it's the same. It's the same as a man doing it. She is a narcissist, so she's an abuser. That's how I feel  
~ **Female survivor**

“ That was the harshest part for me, the emotional stuff, that twisting  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I just didn't feel anywhere near as intimidated by that. What was going on there, it seemed more filmy, as opposed to real  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I myself was a victim of domestic abuse and that film triggered me and that was exactly what my ex partner did to me he was - he gaslighted me basically. I remember watching that and thinking oh god that's what happened to me. For domestic abuse not to be mentioned in the information would be an oversight  
~ **Expert**

“ You'd want domestic abuse and violence. As the whole film when you're watching you do think it's her and it's only towards the end that you realise what's happening. The fear is triggering throughout  
~ **Expert**

“ But we didn't see him actually hit her. So it's more psychological abuse  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Gaslighting. My heart sunk because it just brings it back  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It's basically where they start to take over your mind and your thoughts, so no matter what you say is wrong or whatever you do is wrong, even though it's right, then by the end you've lost all sense of reality. You're questioning yourself  
~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Clips – *The Police Officer's Wife* (15)

“ It's very claustrophobic. I felt trapped as well watching it because I remember the feeling of being always trapped. ~ **Female survivor**

“ And again, it's the sound for me, when he picked the child up as well. ~ **Female survivor**

“ I can't watch it, sorry, I can't. Because it's very true to life. ~ **Female survivor**

“ The impact for me was the anticipation throughout of what's coming next, because I knew when she was laid in bed and she pushed him off, something was going to happen. So, it's the anticipation of that and I don't know if somebody who hadn't experienced what we have could get that. ~ **Female survivor**

“ The silences are just as strong as the physical sounds, and the children, that always gets me, because even now I have a fear of him, you know, ever coming back, but I use the babies, or when my little one was, as a shield. It was like a comfort blanket to me, but at the same time I would just hope and pray that he would never do anything to the children if I hid behind them. ~ **Female survivor**

“ I think for me the locking of the door, because we used to have a separate bedroom and mine was like a prison, I used to have chains on the door and goodness knows what. You're actually thinking it's actually worse because he could probably set fire to it, but you're thinking you're making yourself safe, so that for me with the locks and him still getting in. ~ **Female survivor**

“ That was like me, I could never leave, I couldn't call the police because he would like grip my phone out of my hand, undo my fingers, so just watching this makes me feel really suffocated. ~ **Expert**

## Quotes: Clips - *The Police Officer's Wife* (15) cont.

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“ This was their daily routine, day in and day out and that's what abuse is with the cycle continuing going on and on. It's the psychological thing and you know it's going to happen but just when?  
~ **Male survivor**

“ She's covered in bruises and that's an indication of what's going on and the child is living and witnessing that - there's no doubt about the impact on the child.  
~ **Male survivor**



## Quotes: Remorse

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“ Yes, and they're always sorry.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Just because you do something and then apologise for it doesn't mean that you can minimise what you did.  
~ **Male survivor**

“ It was a rage and then he stopped dead what he was doing - if there were no bruises and he actually felt remorse but the bruises demonstrate that he's being doing this and the child has seen this before.  
~ **Male survivor**

“ They're always sorry, they can't live without us, or they're going to kill themselves without us.  
~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Clips - *Funny Cow* (15/18)

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“ It just felt so graphic, made my stomach sick, it was horrible.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It is graphic, her nose was all bloody.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Just to have somebody that volatile with a child. And then the fact that that's that person's father.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ Even if you don't hit her and he was doing her bad - it's the intimidation isn't it and the fear factor of a tiny little frail girl, the way the camera shot up and he looks huge over her.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It just hits because they're so much more vulnerable, and they haven't got a choice to be there. So, the impact and the vulnerability of that child being pushed into that situation.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I don't class that as child abuse, I'm not saying it isn't, but I would class that as domestic abuse.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ Even her dad, like the fact that her dad is hitting her, it's domestic abuse isn't it? Even though it's child abuse it's like in a domestic household.  
~ **Female survivor**

## Quotes: Clips - *Funny Cow* (15/18) cont.

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“ 15. Graphic. Wasn't just referencing, this is an actual-, we've not seen her get beaten but the whole picture is her being beaten and the language as well.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ That is domestic violence towards his wife. We don't know if the belt was meant for his wife – you can assume that is something that was happening because of the way he was talking about his wife by the window.  
~ **Expert**

“ The dark glasses she put on - a lot of women and victims want to put on makeup, cover their face as though she was hiding it. It's the secrecy, shame and isolation that is so typical of the behaviour tactics used  
~ **Expert**

“ It's the real sensory thing, isn't it, with that one. It actually happens.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ She's just lost it and to her, it's just life. She almost doesn't care anymore what he does to her. He's done it forever. Even the way that she's covered in blood and she's just smoked a cigarette, rather than sorting yourself out, that's just obviously a natural every day occurrence now.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ She was hysterical and been hit and you're seeing the impact of the violence. She needed to present herself, hide the abuse and keep that to herself. It's secretive and it's normalising.  
~ **Male survivor**

## Quotes: Clips – Serenity (I5)

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“ You definitely feel her fear, she’s petrified.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I don’t feel that you need to see it, you can visualise it.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It’s an older man undressing a younger girl – power imbalance is something in there – and you can smell him and it almost turns my stomach.  
~ **Expert**

“ It’s emotional abuse, that one, isn’t it really, rather than seeing actual physical abuse.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ For me the shape of the knife was significant - it was a large phallic shaped knife , saying look at me I’m a big powerful man – toxic masculinity.  
~ **Expert**

“ He’s checking her body in case she cheated on him – abusive, ownership, and controlling behaviour. A I5.  
~ **Expert**

“ I5 – the anticipation and intensity of it.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ She looks so vulnerable, doesn't she? Just to think, to have to stand there naked and she didn't want to and it was really tough to watch, actually.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It's not even the violence it's the strong threat, the possibility that any minute, something could happen  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Clips – *The Shack* (12)

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“ It was a lot milder in the way it was shown. You’d have to use your imagination to imagine something else as going on in there that was more brutal like we’ve seen in the clip before.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ It doesn’t have to be all violent to have an impact on you, like that’s the one that reduced me to tears that one, which was no violence.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I think the word scenes as well as opposed to reference is better.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ I think that if the whole story talks about it rather than a little snippet of domestic abuse.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ But based on that, I’d say it’s quite mild. But it’s still hard to take.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ The lady clearly stated to him, ‘You know, that’s not love.’ And it automatically went to something very sweet, from sadness to sweet. So, it’s flowering things up.  
~ **Woman, General public**

## Quotes: Clips – *Big Little Lies* (15)

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“ He was very coercive, from the piece that we watched, you know, and there are more brutal scenes than that.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ I would say 18. Even though they're flashbacks and they're not actually happening now.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It's still violence. With violence, it's what you see. With language, it's about what you hear.  
~ **Female survivor**

“ It's domestic abuse but on both sides but more him. There's a lot of violence in that.  
~ **Woman, General public**

“ For me it was getting closer to an 18 looking at the violence and the more graphic sex which wasn't cutsey love making, it was raw and unsafe.  
~ **Expert**

“ There was no sound because she was emotionless because it had been beaten out of her that much.  
~ **Woman, General public**



## Quotes: One-off

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“ Brief scenes of domestic violence – brief is good so you know it’s only a slight part of the film.  
~ **Male survivor**

## Quotes: Multiple instances

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“ It’s multiple instances we need to describe that as that is what domestic abuse is – it’s the constant and repeated ongoing behaviour and it’s not just one instance or incident it’s sustained throughout.  
~ **Expert**

## Quotes: Threat

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“ The threat is there throughout that he was going to lose it (*Custody*). He was on eggshells throughout the film and eventually he does lose it. You feel it, you know it's coming.  
~ **Woman, General public**

— “ —

All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear, and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement and remembering... In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting.

*Herman, J.L. (1997) Trauma and Recovery, Basic Books, NYC*