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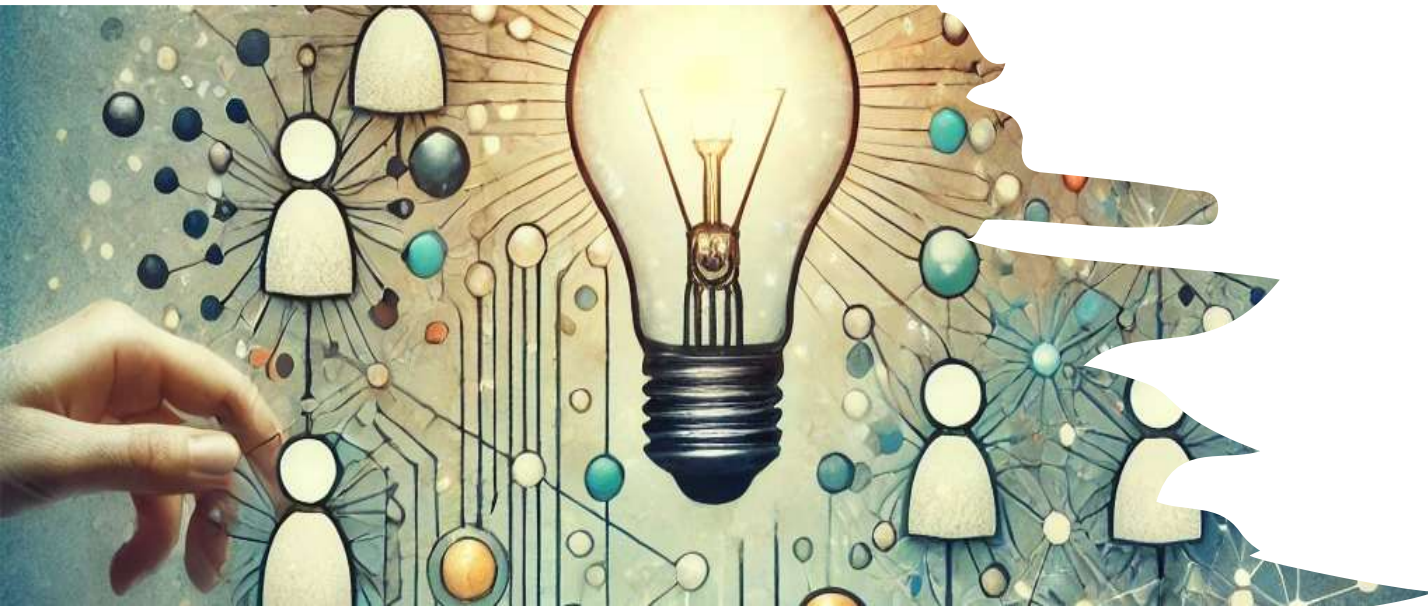
Breaking the Silence

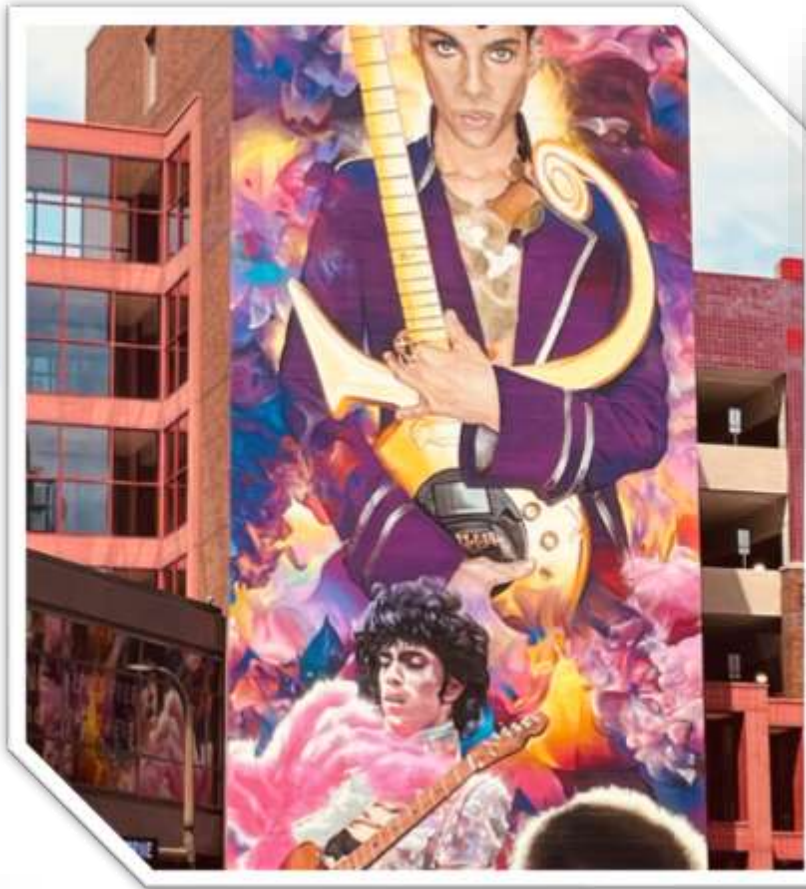


Coordinating Rural Communities to End Domestic Abuse

**Judith Vickress
Churchill Fellow 2023,
Founder of RiTA**

Trustee





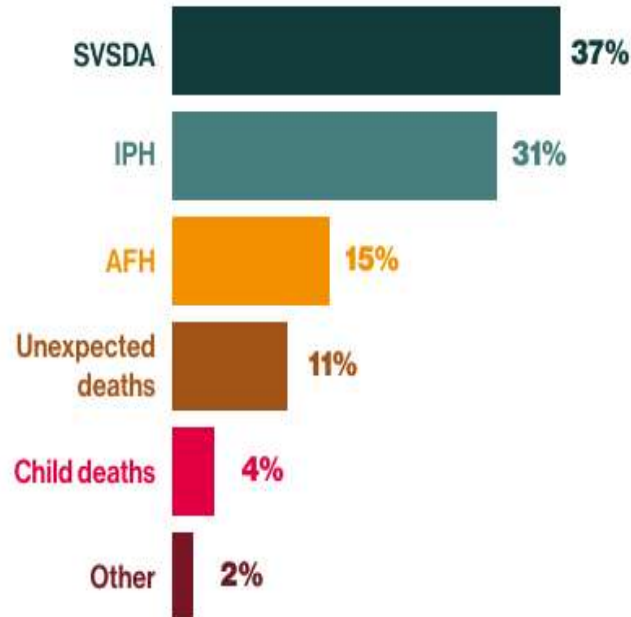
the CHURCHILL fellowship

My Churchill Fellowship - Rural Domestic Abuse -

Is Domestic Abuse A Rural Issue?

- 1 in 4 women experience domestic abuse
- At least **2 women are killed** each week
- Domestic homicides account for at least one in five homicides each year.
- Domestic abuse makes up almost 1 in 6 crimes recorded by the police, and a third of violence against the person crimes.
- 4.1 million women experience economic abuse

1012 domestic
abuse-related deaths
April 2020-March 2024



- Domestic Abuse costs the UK economy **£85bn annually**
- Domestic Abuse is the **leading cause of homelessness** for women and children
- The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** recognised **children as victims** in their own right
- At least one child in every reception class starts school knowing no other life than living with domestic abuse
- There is an intrinsic link between masculinity, poor mental health/**male suicide**, and male perpetrated domestic abuse

What is Domestic Abuse?

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) created, for the first time, a cross-government statutory definition of domestic abuse, to ensure that domestic abuse is understood correctly, considered unacceptable and actively challenged across statutory agencies and in public attitudes.

Abusive behaviour is defined in the act as any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- **Controlling or coercive behaviour**
- **Economic abuse**
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse



Coercive and controlling behaviour is at the heart of domestic abuse.

Coercive control is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation, intimidation, or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.

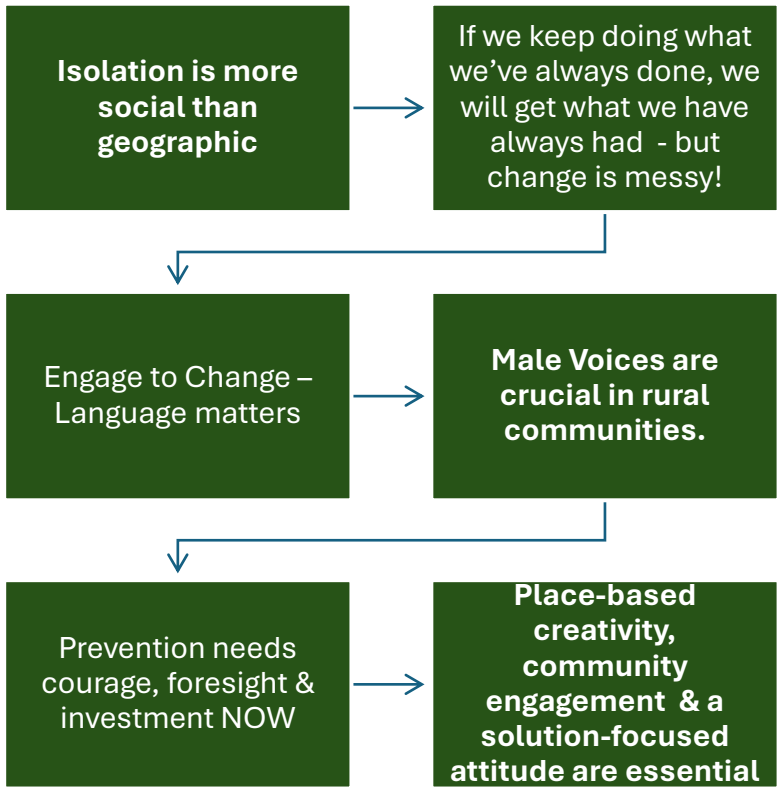
This controlling behaviour is designed to make a person dependent by isolating them from support, exploiting them, depriving them of independence, and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Economic Abuse

Defined by the DA Act 2021 as any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on a person's ability to acquire, use, or maintain money or other property, or to obtain goods and services.

Coercive & Controlling Behaviour has been a crime since 2015 (s.76 Serious Crime Act 2015)

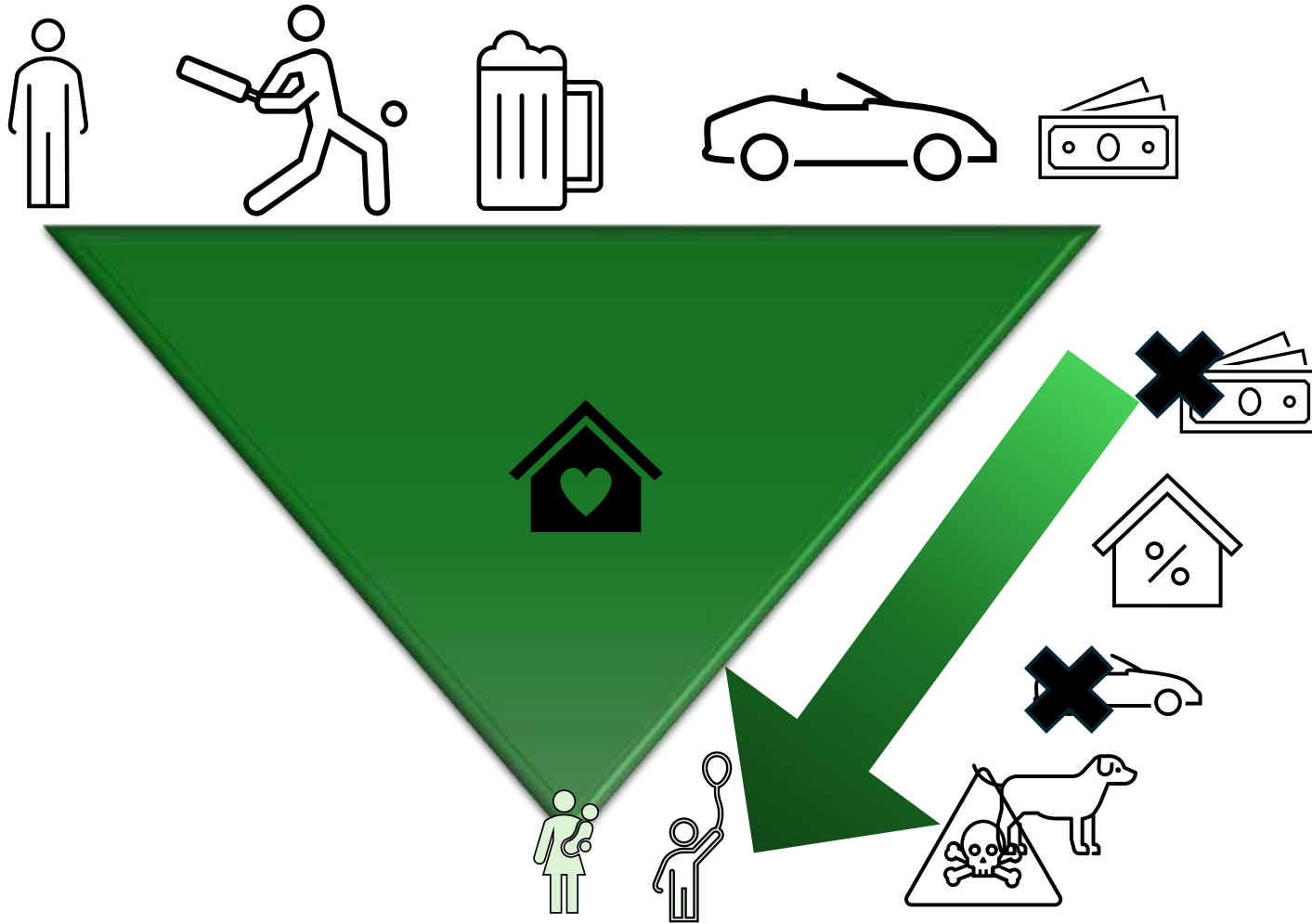
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Rural Idyll
v
Rural Realities

Rurality as a Weapon – Reducing Space for Action



‘Every time we had moved house it was an act of purposeful severance of our mothers’ relationships. Our father had forbidden social media access and controlled our mother’s use of the internet. Her daily movements had to follow a strict and regular schedule. He would never clean the house, fill the car with petrol, or do any grocery shopping to ensure our mother was busy with chores during her days off work and therefore couldn’t spend any time with others.

Luke & Ryan Hart
Remembering Charlotte and Claire

‘I didn’t realise it at the time of course but he actually went out of his way to project this image of the friendly guy who would always lend a hand – you know he got involved in the choir and the village fete committee – but I knew he wasn’t really like that, he was totally manipulative of the situation.’

Survivor, Captive & Controlled 2019



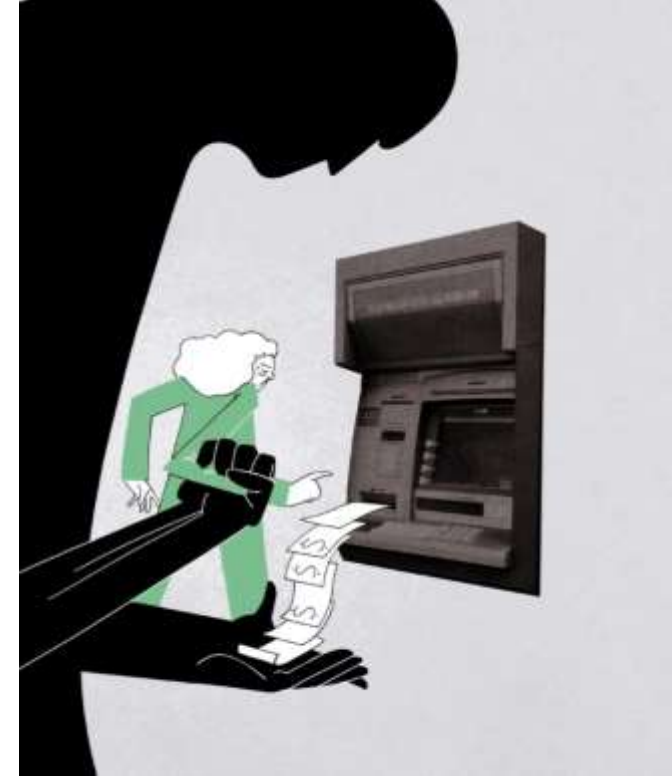
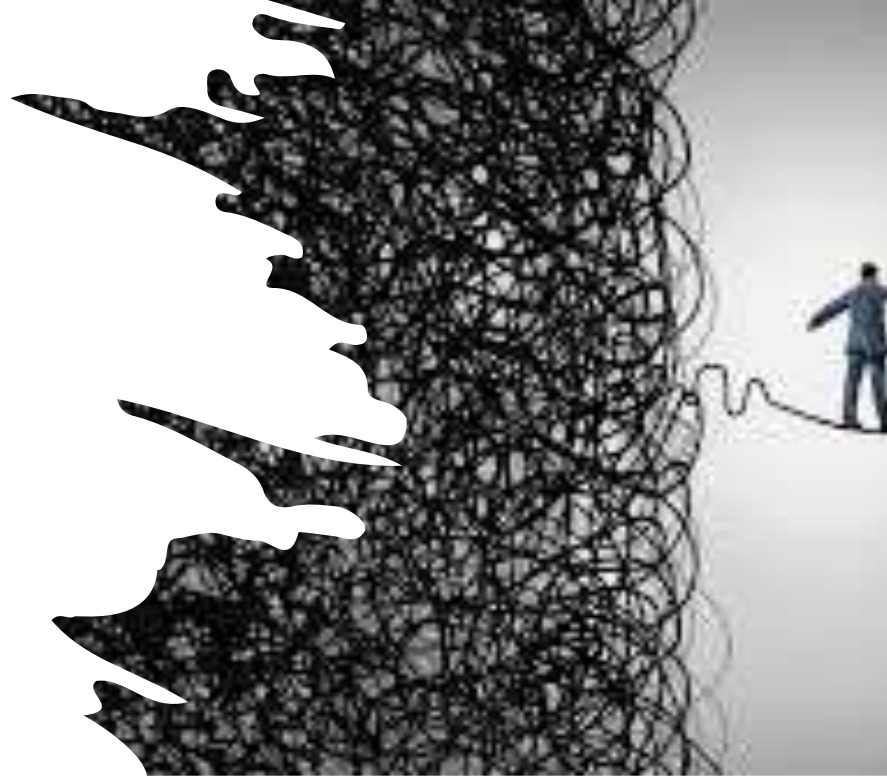
Why doesn't she just leave?

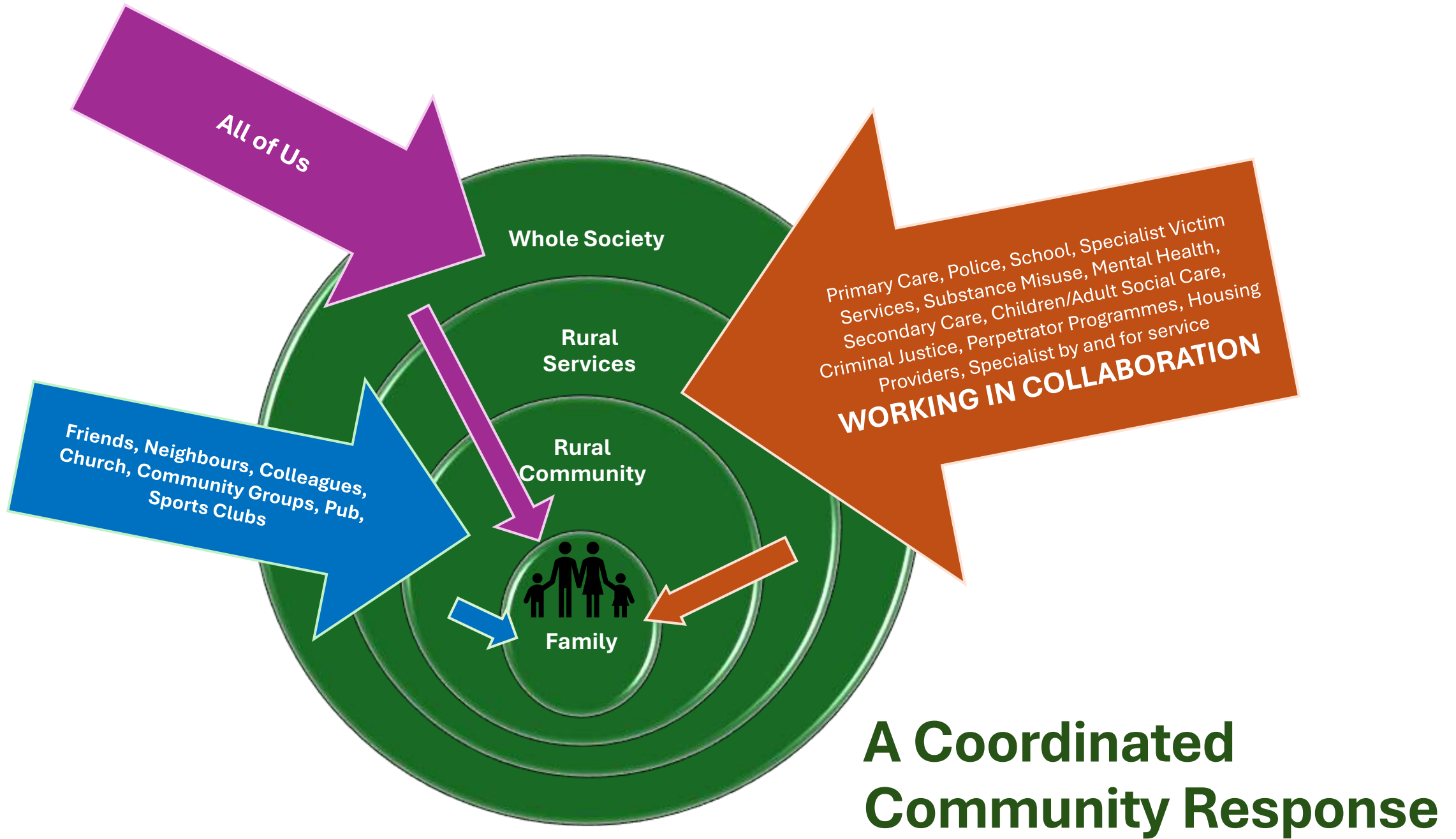
We need to flip the narrative..

Why doesn't he stop?

'Fleeing violence felt like leaving a life-threatening situation to enter poverty. It cost me career choices...'

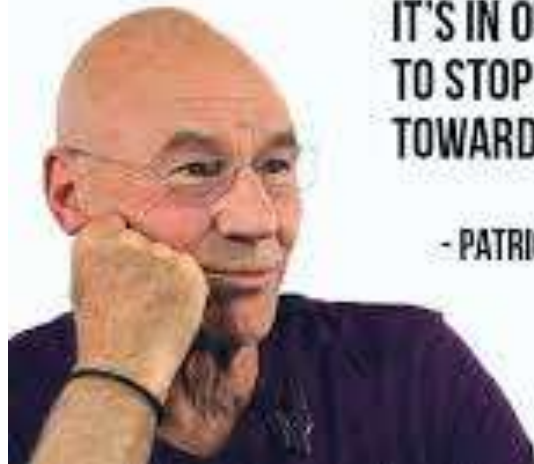
(Survivor)





“Male Violence Against Women & Girls is a Man’s Problem..” Jackson Katz

“THE PEOPLE WHO COULD DO MOST
TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF
SO MANY WOMEN AND CHILDREN
ARE IN FACT MEN.



IT'S IN OUR HANDS
TO STOP VIOLENCE
TOWARDS WOMEN.”

- PATRICK STEWART

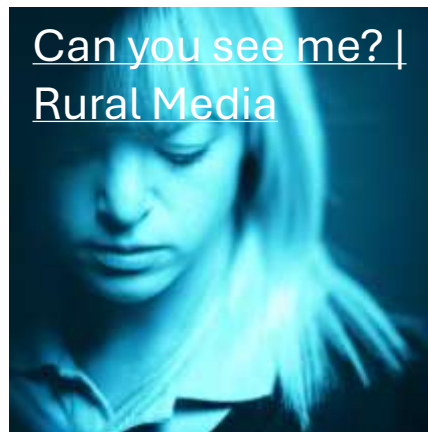


We need more men with the guts,
with the courage, with the strength,
with the moral integrity to break our
complicit silence and challenge each
other and stand with women and
not against them.

— Jackson Katz —

AZ QUOTES

Awareness Raising – The Role of Storytelling and Media



Lived Experience – Survivor Voice

‘One of the reasons I found myself withdrawing was that I was constantly being told by him that it was all my fault.

You see the entire thing as your fault, your issue to deal with, but you can’t! It is a downward spiral that I found I couldn’t fight.

I have never felt as alone as when I was in that relationship – it was like everyone else was out of reach, and it was just me and my kids in the house. Even the house wasn’t a safe place for us, though – so where do you go to? I had no idea, and so you find ways to cope with it.’

(Survivor, Captive & Controlled 2019)



So, What about the UK?

“Captive & Controlled”
2019 (National Rural
Crime Network) – What
happened?

Rural Survivors are
invisible – in policy, in
strategies, in data and in
research.

Rural-proofing of All
Policies
&
Domestic Abuse Proofing
of Rural Policies

Rural classification is 14
years out of date
impacting funding

There is no organisation
dedicated to rural
survivors

Pockets of great rural
initiatives, solution-
focused strategies, and
good practice – but a
postcode lottery for rural
victims/survivors



“Be a Change Maker”



Introducing: RiTA – Rural Initiatives Tackling Abuse (CIC)

Our Purpose:

RiTA exists to drive rural equity, amplify survivor voices, and strengthen safety, accountability, and community resilience in the face of domestic abuse and violence against women, girls, and all children (VAWG/C).

We work in partnership with local leaders, service providers, and communities to create lasting, place-based change, ensuring no one is left behind because of where they live or who they are.



Scan me!



**THANK YOU FOR
LISTENING!**



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