



## Her name is Claire O'Connor not "the body in the boot"

Claire O'Connor was brutally murdered by her partner Aaron Mann who then kept her body in the car. [According to the BBC](#), this makes O'Connor "the body in the boot" and not an actual human with a name.

Granted, the BBC did manage to remember to include the salient information that Mann had a history of perpetrating domestic violence and had been arrested 4 times because of it - arrested but not charged despite physical violence and threats to kill O'Connor. This does not include 12 previous convictions involving 24 offences, including common assault of a previous partner. Aaron Mann was obviously a high risk offender and yet he was not charged.

As with every serious crime review into the murder of a woman or a child, the perpetrator had a clear history of violence against women and children - a history that is evident to any person or agency involved. Yet, women and children continue to die at the hands of violent men because our culture refuses to recognise the links between male entitlement, male privilege and male violence. Instead of holding men accountable for their actions or recognising that it is men who are at high risk of perpetrating violence, we obfuscate. Claire O'Connor becomes "the body in the boot" rather than a person.

The BBC writes of O'Connor withdrawing police complaints. The review mentions agencies who tried to support but O'Connor refused. What we don't see is that women know they are most likely to be killed if they try to leave and leaving is frequently the only 'support' offered (and likely without any safe space to leave to due to lack of refuge space).

Not all state intervention is appropriate. Social workers are not required to undergo domestic violence training as part of their degree even though it makes up a large portion of their case load. If those engaged in 'intervention' don't have specialist training, it can cause more harm to the victim.

These reviews never talk about the fact that police officers are 2-4 times more likely to be perpetrators of domestic violence than the general public - that the officer investigating is quite likely to be a perpetrator.

This is the inevitable response to the death of a woman by a violent partner from the police:

(w)e have reviewed our risk assessment and case management processes and have strengthened processes to ensure that, where appropriate, specialist teams lead cases from the outset.

In addition, we have incorporated extra measures in our officers' training and guidance to emphasise that cases involving a breach of bail conditions should be treated as an indication of high risk.

We don't mention that training for police officers doesn't usually come from specialist



organisations but rather top-down training from within - a situation where the issue of police perpetrators raises its ugly head again. How can police training be adequate if we have a situation where police cover-ups of domestic violence perpetrated by police are common or that the in-house training is taught by a perpetrator?

Instead of raising these questions, the BBC focused on Mann's history of depression and suicide attempts as though depression is an indicator of perpetrating domestic violence. Mental illness is frequently used to excuse male violence. A female perpetrator with depression is labelled a monster - men a victim. The BBC do not make it clear that the vast majority of people with depression are far more likely to self-harm than hurt others or that depression is not an acceptable excuse to kill.

Rather than examining the reality of male violence and inadequate support for victims of domestic violence, the BBC has chosen to reduce Claire O'Connor to an object. Their focus on Mann's mental health as an excuse rather than his clear history of violent behaviour supports a narrative of men incapable of controlling their own behaviour. They don't even include information on how to access support for domestic violence - something that is listed as required in the National Union of Journalists's recommendations on reporting violence against women and girls.

Women's Aid & Refuge freephone: 0808 2000 247