



Family Annihilators

Luke Batty was brutally murdered with a cricket bat by his father Greg Anderson in a cricket ground in the presence of his mother.

Greg Anderson was then shot by a police officer in what was apparently a "suicide by cop".

For 3 days, [the media](#) has been reporting Anderson's poor mental health and writing sympathetic articles about how we must [empathise](#) with Anderson for feeling upset at being denied contact with his son. Excuses were made as were demands for [empathy](#) with Anderson.

Yet, the evidence of Anderson's history of domestic violence has been clear from the start. There is also no evidence of a formal diagnosis of mental illness. This line appears to have come from a quote from Luke's mother Rosie Batty and has been picked up as fact by the media. As far as I have been able to ascertain Anderson had no formal diagnosis of mental illness which has been released to the media although he was homeless for many years; people who are homeless are statistically much more likely to have mental illnesses and ones which remain undiagnosed and untreated than the general population.

We know now that Anderson had been [questioned by the police in January for assault](#) and let go despite 5 outstanding arrest warrants. We know that Anderson had multiple interactions with various agencies because of his history of violent behaviour. We know he was only allowed contact with his son in public places because of his violent behaviour. We know that Rosie Batty had an AVO against him because of his violent behaviour. We also know that the murder was premeditated since Anderson took a knife to the cricket pitch.

Despite this, the media have been writing about how much Anderson "loved his son" and that it wasn't known why Anderson "snapped".

Anderson took a knife to his son's cricket practise. He had a history of domestic violence. These are not the actions of a man who loved his son. They are the actions of a violent, controlling man.

As it stands, we do not know the exact nature of Anderson's health but we do know that men who murder their children very rarely have mental illnesses and that people with mental illness are far more likely to harm themselves than to harm anyone else. This is one of the biggest myths about mental health: that those who have clinical diagnoses are violent.

Men who kill their children, themselves and/or (ex-)partners are referred to as [family annihilators](#). These men have one thing in common: a history of domestic violence. They are controlling men who choose to harm their children and former partners to punish them. If Anderson did suffer from mental health problems, then he is an anomaly rather than representative of men who murder their families.

We need to contextualise the brutal murder of Luke within a pattern of male violence. It is not an



isolated event nor is it one which could not have been predicted. Domestic violence does not happen in a vacuum. In the UK, two women a week are murdered by violent partners. 1 in 3 women in the world will experience domestic and/ or sexual violence. Children and women experience violence in the home on a daily basis.

Domestic violence costs the world economy billions every year yet we continue to pretend that family annihilators are "isolated events" and "tragic incidents". The truth is the opposite: domestic violence is an everyday occurrence for many women and children.

We need to start addressing the issue of domestic violence properly. We need to stop pretending that domestic violence is an isolated, non-gendered crime. Men are the vast majority of perpetrators of domestic violence. These men do not have mental illnesses. They make the choice to be abusive.

I am waiting for the results from an official inquest into the murder of Luke because I do not trust the media to report accurately about the mental health of Anderson. The media is complicit in perpetuating male violence through inaccurate reporting and victim blaming. If it turns out that Anderson did suffer from mental illness that went untreated, then the agencies involved with him will need to be held accountable for their failures. If Anderson was not mentally ill and was a family annihilator, then the media needs to be held accountable for perpetuating damaging myths about mental illness and myths about male violence.

We need the media to stop writing articles which make excuses for violent men. We need them to follow the guidelines set out by the [National Union of Journalists](#) on how to report domestic and sexual violence appropriately. We need the media to take responsibility for perpetuating the myths on domestic and sexual violence.

We need to prevent more children being murdered at the hands of their fathers and we can not do this without being clear what caused their death.