



12 April 2016

## **Work of The Links Group Boosted by Web Support from Vetstream**

[The Links Group](#), a multi-agency interest group that promotes the welfare and safety of vulnerable children, animals and adults, has launched a new website to help raise awareness of its work and ensure the support it offers is more easily accessible to those who need it. Given the sensitive nature of the Group's work, bespoke features include a 'hide your history' facility, together with a quick shut down key to protect the privacy of visitors. The website has been donated to The Links Group by [Vetstream Webpartner](#), which offers website design, online content and digital marketing services to the veterinary profession.

As increasing research and clinical evidence points to the existence of inter-relationships, or 'links', between the abuse of children, vulnerable adults and animals, The Links Group aims to raise awareness of these links among stakeholders, including veterinary and human medical practitioners, government agencies and charities. It also works to facilitate collaboration between these groups to reduce the incidence of abuse and protect those affected.

Dr Freda Scott-Park, Chair of The Links Group, commented: "By working with health visitors, police domestic abuse units and other agencies that provide help to victims, veterinary practices form part of a team that has zero tolerance to violence in all its forms. The police and the human healthcare agencies value the introduction to vets because so often there are animals at risk of violence in abusive households.

She continued: "The value of The Links Group's work is increasingly being recognised but offers of practical help, such as the support we received from Vetstream Webpartner with our website, are a real boost to our volunteer team, who give freely of their time to deliver our important work. An engaging - and safe - website, which is fully integrated with our social media channels, is the cornerstone of our communications and we believe our new website will help us extend our reach

and promote the support and training we offer. We enjoyed working with the team at Webpartner to develop it and are very grateful for their help."

According to Dr Scott-Park, with its new website launched and the Links Veterinary Training Initiative courses taking place biannually or on request, The Links Group is able to help the veterinary community, including veterinary students, vet nurses and receptionists, to recognise the 'golden moment' - the point in a consultation when there is disclosure of non-accidental injury to an animal, or to a human victim.

She explains: "This is the opportunity for the veterinary professional to listen and to extend sympathy to the client; this moment of compassionate help may be the first time that the victim has been able to talk to anyone about the situation that they are in. Vets are not expected to be an expert in abuse but The Links Group Guidance provides a script for appropriate questions and offers useful resources, including a contacts card, to offer to victims of domestic abuse.

"It is a harrowing to realise that an animal has been deliberately hurt so our work is important to help veterinary professionals cope. We hope that the launch of our new website will, with the help of our colleagues in human healthcare, bring greater awareness of our work so that when a vet or RVN or one of their colleagues is faced with a situation where they recognise abuse, they know where they can turn for support."

Dr G Mark Johnston, Managing Director of Vetstream, said: "Domestic abuse is an issue which has emerged from the shadows in recent weeks thanks largely to a storyline in *The Archers*. Two women a week in the UK are killed by their partners<sup>1</sup> - a shocking figure which highlights the need for help to support those at risk. Because of the nature of its work, The Links Group's website required a number of specific technical features which we were able to provide. We were delighted to support its vital work."

<sup>1</sup> Figure from Statistics for Domestic Abuse (Office of National Statistics, 2015)

**Note to editors:**

These recent articles provide more information on the issue of domestic abuse:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/04/04/the-archers-rob-titchener-lives/>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/04/the-guardian-view-on-domestic-abuse-truth-fiction-and-the-archers>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/01/helen-archers-domestic-abuse-husband-louisa-patikas>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/after-two-years-of-complaints-about-sexing-up-the-archers-bbc-has-produced-most-important-storyline-a6967951.html>

Vetstream's services, grouped under the 'Treat, Learn, Communicate (TCL)' banner, include:

#### **'Treat'**

Vetlexicon is the world's largest online clinical veterinary reference tool, offering comprehensive, peer-reviewed digital point-of-care information on the veterinary treatments of dogs, cats, rabbits and horses. Accessible 24/7 on any internet-enabled device, it is a unique expert resource available to practices, which is trusted, updated and reviewed by more than 900 of the world's leading veterinarians.

#### **'Learn'**

Vetacademy is Vetstream's user-friendly online platform, providing the whole practice team with the ability to search and select from more than 300 courses from the world's leading training and CPD providers, including the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Medicine, the North American Veterinary Community (NAVC) and Elsevier, all brought together in one place.

#### **'Communicate'**

Vetstream's Webpartner team offers a suite of website design, online content and digital marketing services designed specifically for the veterinary profession.

#### **For further information:**

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