

DHR 18

4-MINUTE BRIEFING

1. Family composition

- Callum is the 33-year-old subject of the DHR
- Stacey is the 28-year-old partner.
- Callum had four children but was separated from their mother who is called Debbie.
- Callum is survived by both parents who are separated.
- Callum also had siblings.
- Stacey has one child who lived with her up until the homicide and who now lives with the birth father; he and Stacey had been separated for several years

2. Background to DHR 18

- Stacey was convicted of manslaughter and is serving a term of imprisonment.
- The court heard that Stacey stabbed Callum when he attempted to prevent her from self-harming in 2020
- Callum's relationship with Stacey began in February 2019 when they met via social media.
- They both had previous relationships that involved domestic abuse and had a significant history of the police being called to incidents in those relationships.
- This pattern of contact with the police continued during their relationship until the tragic incident that resulted in Callum's death.

3. Callum

- Callum had difficulties with substance abuse and poor mental health through much of his adult life.
- Although he saw his GP on a more regular basis than other patients of his age he did not have contact with any specialist services about his substance abuse or poor mental health. This included the time he spent in prison.
- Callum's father stated that his son thought that he could help Stacey with her self-harm.
- The court was told that Callum was trying to prevent Stacey from harming herself with a knife when he was stabbed.

4. Stacey

- Stacey also had poor mental health that began in her childhood when she was abused.
- Stacey's use of alcohol and drugs began when she was about 15 years old.
- Although Stacey was referred to specialist services at different times she had difficulty in getting involved in the help and support that was offered.
- Stacey also self-harmed as a method of coping with her difficulties.

5. Professionals Involved

- Community Drug and Alcohol Services (Stoke-on-Trent) had contact with Stacey at various times over 13 years up to September 2019 primarily about her use of alcohol and cannabis
- National Probation Service had contact with Callum over 15 years following his conviction for various offences which included violence to a former partner
- North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare had brief and sporadic contact with Callum in criminal justice settings in 2012 and 2013;
- Callum was referred to the Mental health Access Team by his GP in June 2019 with thoughts of self-harm although he only attended an initial appointment; there was more extensive contact with Stacey since 2013 when she completed a course of CBT; Stacey was referred to secondary mental health services in 2017 and diagnosed with an emotionally unstable personality disorder
- Staffordshire Police had contact with Callum over several years in connection with offences of violence which including assaulting previous intimate partners; Callum had served a prison sentence for breaching a restraining order and for burglary
- Staffordshire Police had contact with Stacey as a victim of domestic abuse in previous relationships as well as responding to incidents while Stacey and Callum were in a relationship in Stoke-on Trent
- Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group provided primary health care through GP practices for Callum, Stacey and her child; Callum and Stacey had regular contact with their GP about low mood and substance misuse
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council Children and Family Services (inc. Education); children's social care services had contact with Stacey and her child from 2009 in response to child safeguarding concerns and this included use of child in need (CIN) and child protection plans; the service also had contact from 2011 with Callum about domestic abuse and his children; involvement included support through CIN plans and child protection plans.

6. Key Issues

- The relationship between Callum and Stacey represented a probability of higher risk domestic abuse given the respective histories they had with previous partners. They were both having to deal with significant levels of poor mental health and long-term substance misuse
- Although the potential for the relationship to be abusive was recognised by the offender manager there was not the same level of curiosity and concern by other professionals
- The respective GPs were consulted by both Callum and Stacey but showed little curiosity or exploration about domestic abuse. This was also reflected in the contact that Stacey had with mental health and substance abuse services although with both services she struggled to engage and maintain contact with them.
- None of the people working with Callum or Stacey had a good enough understanding of what prevents domestic abuse from being disclosed and therefore being more curious and thinking of strategies to engage Stacey differently
- Callum had no help from mental health or substance abuse services and he was not referred to perpetrator programmes either in the community or when he spent time in prison.

7. Learning

- The relationship between Callum and Stacey represented a probability of higher risk domestic abuse given the respective histories they had with previous partners. They were both having to deal with significant levels of poor mental health and long-term substance misuse. Their relationship represented high levels of risk relating to domestic abuse.
- Although the potential for the relationship to be abusive was recognised by the offender manager there was not the same level of curiosity and concern by other professionals such as social workers or police both of whom had a significant history with both Callum and Stacey.
- None of the people working with Callum or Stacey had a good enough **understanding** of what prevents domestic abuse from being disclosed and therefore being more curious and thinking of strategies to engage Stacey differently.
- Managing of **transfers** when adults and children at risk of harm move to new locations; Stoke-on-Trent children's services providing a more comprehensive transfer summary to Derbyshire Children's Services
- The risk represented by her history of domestic abuse, her friendship with Jason and the history of Callum was not made clear in the information given
- The practice of **relying on a victim** to flee from one area to another as a strategy to deal with domestic abuse is not appropriate and especially when there are no multi-agency plan of safety in place.
- Access to **perpetrator programmes**
- Confidence and use of **DASH** by services other than the police
- Children's social care services completing timely and comprehensive assessments and parental consents; a parent **withholding consent** should not be an absolute obstruction to enquiry and investigation of risk