



Domestic Homicide Review in relation to Jane

Date of death August 2022

Independent Chair and Author: Stuart Douglass

Report completed June 2023

Foreword from Jane's Sister

Jane had the best laugh. Loud, bubbly, and explosive, very much like her; Jane didn't really do things quietly. She was full of fun and had a zest for life; she lit up a room simply by being in it. One of her colleagues described her as a 'force', she had a presence about her that I've not experienced in anyone else.

She loved a night out, a chance to dress up (with one of the many dresses from her multiple wardrobes, along with matching shoes and handbags). She'd often be the one arranging work nights out, the Christmas 'do' being one of her favourites.

Jane appeared to most as being confident, she wouldn't mince her words; she'd say what she thought and stand by it. She was very much her father's daughter when it came to being right, but when she did back down, there was a humility about her.

She was the best Auntie my children could have had; they had a second Mum in Jane. She was interested in all that they did, had the same worries and dreams for them as I did and she loved them fiercely. She loved spending time with them, going out for meals, having them sleepover, she simply loved to look after and care for them. They had a relationship with her that they'll never find again.

Her friends say she was wonderful and generous, helping anyone in need. The character that she was meant she was much loved by not only her friends, but their families too.

She loved and thrived on the banter she had at work, both with her colleagues and customers. So many came to her funeral, tradesmen leaving site in workwear complete with dirt and dust, just so they could attend. The crematorium was packed, people were standing outside during the service. One man spoke to me at her wake saying he'd only known her for 18 months but felt he had to be at her funeral because she'd had such an impact on him.

I, like many others, shall miss Jane until my time comes. There will be so many events and occasions where her absence will be harshly felt. Every day there is something I wish I could share with her or talk to her about. The feeling of loss will never diminish. The world is a duller and a sadder place without Jane in it.

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Preface

The review panel offer their deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Jane. This review is about considering the events prior to a homicide and whether agencies can learn from that to improve understanding and response in the future.

The chair would like to thank Jane's family and Lucy and Cassie of the Victim Support Homicide Service and Detective Chief Inspector Graeme Barr of Northumbria Police, for their cooperation and assistance with this review.

Further thanks are extended to DHR panel for their engagement and contributions.

Foreword – Chair of the Safer North Tyneside Partnership

I would like to express my deepest sympathies to Jane's family and friends. Jane's sister has painted a heartfelt and moving picture of the type of person that Jane was and I am grateful to her for participating in this review. It is clear that Jane was deeply loved by everyone who knew her.

The shock of losing a loved one to such unexpected and sudden violence cannot be understated. The research undertaken by the Chair of this review highlights some shocking facts about this type of tragic crime. Though it is thankfully rare, the aftershocks are so severe for families and friends that it makes coming to terms with their loss extraordinarily difficult. Understanding why this happened is really important for those left behind and I must acknowledge the vital work that Victim Support and other advocates do to support families.

This review sought to analyse how this tragedy happened and what we each, as both professionals and members of our communities, might do to stop this happening in future. Leaving a relationship can be extremely difficult and we have all known relatives, friends or neighbours who have continued to live together while navigating the end of a relationship or marriage. Few of us could even imagine that the end of a relationship could lead to a tragedy like this.

This review highlights two key things that require collective action; raising professional awareness of the risk profile for murder/suicides and raising some community awareness of how changes to people's circumstances could lead to abuse, escalation of abuse and in some cases, extreme violence, and how to access support.

I have asked the North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and the North Tyneside Safeguarding Adults Board for their support to coordinate implementation of the important recommendations in this report.

Councillor Karen Clark

Chair of the Safer North Tyneside Partnership Board

Section 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report of a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) examines agency responses given to Jane, a resident of North Tyneside, prior to her homicide in August 2022.
- 1.2 Jane was unlawfully killed by her former partner George, who then committed suicide.
- 1.3 The review considers agency contact and involvement with Jane and George for the 24 months prior to her homicide.
- 1.4 The rationale for the period chosen was that scoping of agency contact indicated that the relationship had ended in that period though George still lived at the house.
- 1.5 The purpose for undertaking DHR's is to enable lessons to be learned from homicides where a person is killed or takes their own life as a result of domestic violence and abuse. In order for these lessons to be learned as widely and thoroughly as possible, professionals need to be able to understand fully what happened in each homicide, and most importantly, what needs to change to reduce the risk of such tragedies happening in the future.

Section 2 Timescales

- 2.1 Northumbria Police referred the death to the Safer North Tyneside Community Safety Partnership¹ on 9th August 2022 for consideration to undertake a Domestic Homicide Review.
- 2.2 The referral was formally considered in line with Home Office statutory guidance². The Community Safety Partnership notified the Home Office of their intention to undertake a Domestic Homicide Review on 16th August 2022. The commencement of the review was delayed until completion of the Police investigation on 24th November 2022.
- 2.3 The Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) was commissioned with due regard to the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 and relevant criteria to this case are highlighted in bold. The Act states:

(1) In this section “domestic homicide review” means a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse, or neglect by—

(a) a person to whom he was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or

(b) a member of the same household as himself,

held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death.

- 2.4 The review considered available agency information from the period August 2020 until August 2022 having identified that there was no

¹ Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), established by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, are made up of representatives from the police, local authorities, and the fire, health, and probation services (known as responsible authorities). CSP's have a range of responsibilities including the commission of domestic homicide reviews (established under s9 Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-statutory-guidance-for-the-conduct-of-domestic-homicide-reviews>

significant contact in the period prior to that and that the relationship began to end over that period.

- 2.5 Stuart Douglass was appointed as Independent Chair and Author of the review on 25th November 2022, following confirmation that the Police investigation had concluded.
- 2.6 The review panel commenced work on the DHR in January 2023. The Panel met on 4 occasions. The review concluded in June 2023.
- 2.7 The review was initially completed within a 6 month period in line with Home Office Guidance, however just prior to submission to Community Safety Partnership Board, Jane's family were approached by a previous partner of George who subsequently agreed to speak to the chair. This changed the known history regarding abusive behaviour, requiring a redrafting of the review report and necessitating a further Panel meeting to consider the impact of this information.

Section 3 Confidentiality

- 3.1 The findings of each review are confidential until agreement to publish has been given by the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel.
- 3.2 Pseudonyms are used throughout the report to protect the identity of the individual(s) involved as follows:
 - Victim - Jane
 - Perpetrator - George
 - Sister and brother-in-law - Jane's sister preferred to not be identified by a pseudonym
 - Former partner of perpetrator - Deborah

- Friend A - (had known Jane for over 30 years)
- Friend B - (had known Jane for several years)
- Friend C - (had met Jane when they were both 16 years of age and they socialised regularly)
- Friend D - (had known Jane for 35 years and kept in regular contact)

3.3 The victim was White British and aged 54 years at the time of the fatal incident.

3.4 The perpetrator was White British and aged 65 years at the time of the fatal incident.

Section 4 Terms of Reference and Methodology

4.1 The purpose of the domestic homicide review (DHR) is to:

- Establish the facts that led to the homicide and whether there are any lessons to be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together
- Identify clearly what these lessons are, both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result
- Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to inform national and local policies and procedures as appropriate
- Prevent domestic violence and homicide and improve service responses for all victims of domestic violence and abuse, by developing

a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that domestic abuse is identified and responded to at the earliest opportunity

- Contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic abuse
- Highlight good practice

4.2 The review identified the following key lines of enquiry (KLOE):

- KLOE 1 - To identify the history of the relationship with regards to domestic abuse and/or coercive behaviour
- KLOE 2 - Did any agency have knowledge of domestic abuse and/or coercive control in respect of the relationship between Jane and George?
- KLOE 3 - To identify service contact with Jane and George and if those services were responsive and accessible
- KLOE 4 - Were any agencies aware of the suicidal ideation of George?
- KLOE 5 - To consider if there were any barriers to the identification and reporting of coercive control, domestic or other forms of abuse in relation to Jane. (This should include consideration of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic)
- KLOE 6 - Identify any areas whereby local or national improvement could be made to the existing legal, policy or practice framework

4.3 The Domestic Homicide Review followed the methodology outlined in the Home Office statutory guidance. Sources of information included:

- Individual Management Review reports and comprehensive chronology
- Information reports
- Homicide investigation material

- Interview with the victim's family representative
- Interview with the perpetrator's sister
- A combined chronology
- Relevant literature review

4.4 The terms of reference were drafted following the initial Panel meeting. The family representative was consulted and offered the opportunity to comment.

Section 5 Involvement of family, friends, work colleagues, neighbours, and wider community

5.1 The chair contacted the sister of Jane via the Victim Support Homicide Service who provided support and advocacy. Jane's sister and her husband met with the chair and provided valuable insight and Jane's voice. Jane's sister was given the opportunity to attend a panel meeting however declined and a further meeting with the chair and her advocate was arranged to consider the draft report. Jane's sister is planning to meet the domestic abuse lead at North Tyneside to discuss progress on the action plan at a future date.

5.2 In addition the Police investigation had gathered statements from a wide range of friends and work colleagues of Jane which provided further background in relation to Jane and George.

Section 6 Involvement of the perpetrator

6.1 The chair approached the perpetrator's sister who supplemented the information she had given to police at the time of the homicide. At a late-stage contact was made with a previous partner which provided further

insight. No other persons connected to the perpetrator could be identified to assist in building upon the limited picture in relation to him.

Section 7 Contributors to the Review

Northumbria Police	Investigation statements
Newcastle Foundation Trust	Individual Management Review
North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board	Individual Management Review
Department for Work and Pensions	Information report
North East Ambulance Service	Individual Management Review
North Tyneside Council Adult Social Care	Information report
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust	Individual Management Review

7.1 Individual Management Review authors had no management responsibility for any staff who had contact with either Jane or George.

Section 8 Review Panel Members

8.1 Members of the DHR Panel were as follows:

Northumbria Police	Ian Callaghan - Detective Inspector Strategic Innovation Partnership Safeguarding
North Tyneside Council	Lindsey Ojomo - Resilience and Community Safety Manager

	Ellie Anderson - Assistant Director Business and Quality Assurance, Adult Social Care Lesley Pyle - Northumberland & North Tyneside Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Lead
Harbour ³	Lesley Hill - Preventions Worker/ DAPS Team
North East Ambulance Service	Jane Stubbings - Named Lead Professional for Safeguarding Adults, Quality and Safety
Independent Chair/Author	Stuart Douglass
Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service	Steven Gilbert - Head of Function: North Tyneside and Northumberland PDU
North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board	Adrian Dracup - Designated Nurse Safeguarding Adults
Cumbria, Northumberland Tyne, and Wear NHS Foundation Trust	Sheona Duffy - Acting Team Manager Safeguarding and Public Protection / Named Nurse
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Yvonne Lawrence - Acting Head of Safeguarding Children & Adults and Acute Liaison Learning Disability Service
The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	Lesley Sinclair - Named Nurse Adult Safeguarding
Department for Work and Pensions	Jackie Butson - Advanced Customer Support Senior Leader

³ Harbour is an independent north east charity with over 40 years of providing services to victims of domestic abuse.

8.2 The panel met on 4 occasions supplemented by additional e-mail consultation in relation to draft reports. Panel members had no line management responsibility for any staff who may have had contact with Jane or George. The chair was satisfied that the panel members were independent. In addition, the chair had several individual discussions with panel representatives.

Section 9 Author of the Overview Report

9.1 Sections 36 to 39 of the Home Office Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews⁴ sets out the requirements for review chairs and authors. In this review the chair and author roles were combined.

9.2 Stuart Douglass was appointed as the Domestic Homicide Review chair and author. Stuart is an independent practitioner with over 30 years' of local government senior management experience of safer communities, safeguarding and domestic abuse. Stuart completed approved Home Office accredited DHR Chair training in 2016 following a 12 month period shadowing a DHR chair and he continues to develop his practice via the Action After Fatal Domestic Abuse DHR chairs network.

9.3 Stuart was previously employed by Northumbria Police between 1990 and 1994 as a crime researcher specialising in acquisitive crime and with North Tyneside Council between 1994 and 1997 as a safer communities officer. This was declared to the commissioner of the review prior to appointment

⁴ Statutory guidance for the conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews, published December 2016, Home Office.

and not considered to affect his independence given the considerable time elapsed since those employments. Stuart has had no employment connection with any other agency represented within this review.

Section 10 Parallel Reviews

- 10.1 HM Senior Coroner for Newcastle and North Tyneside opened and concluded inquest proceedings in relation to the deaths. The coroner was briefed on the progress of the DHR throughout the process and draft findings shared. Subsequently the Coroner held inquests which determined that Jane was unlawfully killed as a result of a violent assault in which she had suffered blunt head injuries, and that George had died by suicide, having hanged himself.
- 10.2 There were no other parallel reviews.

Section 11 Equality and Diversity

- 11.1 The review gave due consideration to each of the protected characteristics under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 11.2 The review panel identified sex and age as relevant protected characteristics to this review. (see section 18.1 and 18.4). Following Home Office feedback prior to publication the review reconsidered disability as a potential characteristic due to Jane's diabetes condition. The conclusion drawn by the Chair and Jane's family was that whilst she took medication for the condition it did not adversely affect her daily life and activities.
- 11.3 There were no other protected characteristics relevant to the review.

Section 12 Dissemination

- 12.1 Recipients who will receive copies of the review report:

- Family representative
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner
- North Tyneside Domestic Abuse Partnership Board
- HM Senior Coroner Newcastle and North Tyneside
- Safer North Tyneside

Section 13 Background Information (The Facts)

13.1 In August 2022 Jane had failed to turn up for work. Her colleagues found this out of character and being aware that Jane had diabetes had made several unsuccessful attempts to contact her, including attending her home address. Subsequently Police were requested to enter her home. Jane was found deceased having suffered a physical assault. Her former partner was also found deceased at the property having appeared to have taken his own life.

Section 14 Background prior to the timescales under review

- 14.1 Jane was born in the north east of England and had lived with her mother and father and younger sister until she was 27 years old. The family were described as “very close”, with extended family living in the same area and being a significant part of family life during Jane’s childhood.
- 14.2 Jane left school at 16 and undertook a Youth Training Scheme before being employed full time for a large builders’ merchants.

- 14.3 Jane had commenced her relationship with George in around 2004. She reportedly met George via a "small ad" he had placed. George and Jane initially had separate homes before he moved in to her flat. Jane's sister recalled that she had been unsure at first. Subsequently Jane bought a house but insisted on buying this in her sole name. George was employed as a plumber however later in the relationship he no longer worked but did not claim benefits.
- 14.4 Jane was described as having a close relationship with her family and a circle of friends with whom she regularly socialised and had almost daily contact. Jane supported her elderly mother who lived in the area. Accounts indicated that George would rarely if ever socialise with Jane and her friends though he would go shopping with Jane and her mother.
- 14.5 Jane had worked as a senior administrator for her employer for 34 years and was described as a trusted, highly efficient, reliable, and loyal employee, who was very popular with a wide range of staff, some of whom were friends she socialised with regularly. Accounts illustrated that Jane would always arrive at work early and was highly focussed and enjoyed being at work.
- 14.6 George was born in the north east and had 2 older sisters. He reportedly had a difficult relationship with his father throughout his life, with his father disapproving of his decisions regarding work and personal relationships. George's father reportedly secured him a job as a plumber when he left school which he did not like. In the late 1970's George joined the Royal Air Force, married, and was posted in Germany before being based in Oxfordshire. When George left the Royal Air Force, the marriage broke down and he divorced his wife in the early 1990's.

- 14.7 In the late 1990's George entered a new relationship with Deborah, however this ended whilst Deborah was pregnant. George had no subsequent contact with their child. Deborah met with George's sister just after the child was born, and whilst she did not disclose abuse, she had described living with George as "*difficult*".
- 14.8 Deborah met with the chair and discussed her relationship. She had met George via a friend, and they had a relationship for 3 years, however only lived together for the last 6 months of this. During much of this time George was living and working in Cambridgeshire and they would meet on a regular basis with George travelling to the north east or Deborah visiting him. She described that he had "*hated*" his father, a retired police officer and "*disliked*" his mother though they would visit his parents when he was in the north east.
- 14.9 Deborah had a 5-year-old daughter and George "*adored*" her and they had day trips out, though always to locations connected to George's interest in local history which caused some frustration for Deborah as she felt that her child was not interested in these locations.
- 14.10 George asked Deborah to approach his mother for £1500 to pay for renewal of his gas certificates associated with his employment. Deborah had visited his mother to ask for this and she refused. Deborah stated that on a couple of occasions George's mother had asked if George had ever hit her which she found strange but in hindsight wondered why the question was asked.
- 14.11 George eventually moved to the north east into Deborah's home and she reported that they would argue and one occasion she asked him to leave. He stayed with a neighbour overnight before she agreed to take him back. The period of living together lasted 6 months.

- 14.12 Deborah became pregnant in 2000 and when in an early stage (7/8 weeks) they had been to a public house where George was reported as drinking heavily. They had left to go home to prepare dinner and whilst Deborah was in the kitchen, she had heard her daughter (who was now 8 years old) “yell” because of George hitting her. Deborah immediately asked George to leave and ended the relationship. Subsequently Deborah’s daughter disclosed to her that George had been emotionally abusive frequently driving the car away whilst the child was waiting for him to open the door. Deborah found that this explained that whilst initially her daughter had enjoyed visits out with him alone, she had become increasingly reluctant to do so. Her daughter also disclosed that she had been fed a prawn from his takeaway meal and told to go and kiss her mother. She had not done this, though Deborah had highlighted that she had severe allergic reactions to any contact with shellfish which George was aware of.
- 14.13 Deborah described George as having a short temper and being lazy with household tasks and reluctant to spend his money on the household necessities, preferring to spend it socially on what she described as finer things such as expensive coffee shops. She described him as “adaptive” to his environment and he did not want people to know he was divorced. She described that he had not wanted to follow his father’s wishes for him to undertake a career in the police force, however, he had joined the “red caps in the RAF”, who were the RAF police force.
- 14.14 Despite being pregnant Deborah disclosed that after the incident where he had drunk heavily and had struck her child, she finished the relationship immediately and cut her ties almost completely from George. She disclosed growing up in a household characterised by alcohol and

domestic abuse from her father to her mother and that this influenced her decision.

- 14.15 Following the birth of the baby George had challenged paternity, though tests had subsequently proven he was the father. Deborah had no further contact with George, though he had left a birthday card with a neighbour for the child's second birthday, and she had spotted him at a distance in the local town centre on a couple of occasions in later years. George paid no child maintenance despite Child Support Agency efforts. Deborah was clear that George had not been abusive to her though in hindsight regarded him as a "bully".
- 14.16 Deborah did maintain some written contact with George's sister and mother and had sent photographs of the child to George's mother, though subsequently had been asked by George's sister to send them via herself as George's father had found the photographs and Deborah believed he was not pleased that George's mother had them.
- 14.17 Around this time George had visited his sister and asked to stay for a few nights. His sister had agreed and described as follows, "*George expected to be looked after and doing nothing to help. On the second evening for no reason, he threw something down in temper and said, "I DON'T NEED THIS". It was frightening, and my son was present. George was a hard person to know and like*". George's sister had asked him to leave immediately, and he left.
- 14.18 George had contact again with his sister in 2016 when their father had entered a care home and his house needed to be cleared. She described that George and Jane had offered to clear the house and commented,

"this was a better stage in our relationship which I think was down to Jane's influence".

14.19 George's sister described in her police statement,

"At around 7am one morning just before our father's funeral George was shouting down the phone at me that our father was an awful man, and he didn't want to be included in any part of it. He was loud and abusive. This came without warning: I had been with him a few days before planning the funeral with him and nothing was mentioned. George said he hated our father and the family. I don't believe this was due to money. Our father included him in his Will, and he inherited half of everything."

14.20 George's sister had described to the chair that he had no mental health issues she was aware of, but commented that when he was unemployed, he could appear "low".

14.21 Friend A had known Jane for over thirty years and recounted that Jane met George around 2004 and that he had lived in a rented flat but had moved in with Jane as their relationship progressed. Although the friend had regular contact with Jane, she indicated that she did not know much about George and that she had probably only spoken to him around a "dozen times" in seventeen or eighteen years. She described Jane as, *"the life and soul of the party who liked to go out and socialise. George was the total opposite of this and didn't really like to socialise and came across as socially awkward"*. She described that George, *"used to work as a gas fitter but fell out with his employer about the cost of doing the gas safety course, and he never went back to work after this. It was just assumed that Jane would pay for him, and he couldn't claim benefits as Jane worked. Prior to this Jane and George did eat out and go away together but this*

had become less and less. I recall Jane telling me about a holiday that her and George had in Santorini prior to COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions. They had an argument whilst there and George went off to stay in another hotel for 2/3 nights without telling her”.

The friend indicated that *“Jane never appeared or told me she was frightened of George”.*

14.22 Friend B described that Jane had disclosed that she should have left George many years previously and that their relationship had not been physical for some years, and they had little in common. This led to a mutual friend suggesting dating sites. The friend recounted that the relationship between Jane and George had further deteriorated in 2022 and that Jane had disclosed that she had asked George for money. Previously he had paid for holidays and meals out but not contributed to the household expenses.

14.23 Friend C had known Jane since they were both 16 years of age and they would meet for a drink on a Wednesday and a Saturday each week. She described herself as *“getting along”* with George however, *“he was the opposite of Jane, he did not like socialising, he preferred to stay home. I always thought he was miserable”.* She further highlighted that, *“Jane never mentioned any violence in the relationship, and I never felt there was any violence in their relationship, she did care for him, but she didn’t love him anymore”.*

14.24 A work colleague of Jane’s recounted that Jane had described her relationship with George as not being a *“normal”* relationship. *“For example, she told me that George used to stay up to the very early hours of the*

morning on the internet or watching TV and he never wanted to work even though he was a qualified gas fitter”.

- 14.25 George was described by Jane’s sister as being not motivated unless he was undertaking a task for himself such as researching history. She described that when Jane wanted a new bathroom, she had employed a plumber as she knew that George would not do it despite being qualified to do so. She also described Jane’s increased frustration that George would not clean and look after the house as a contribution to the household when he was not working.
- 14.26 A neighbour had described George as quiet and not very sociable, sometimes acting “*strange*”, standing in the garden, and staring up at the roof of the house. He was also described as occasionally having target practice with an air rifle in the garden.
- 14.27 Jane often spent weekends away in South Yorkshire with her sister and her family and this included regular holidays with the family and their children. George reportedly only visited once early in the relationship and Jane would undertake these visits and holidays alone.
- 14.28 Jane and George did go out together prior to 2020 both for meals and to have holidays, which he would either pay for or contribute towards. On holiday abroad just prior to 2020 they reportedly had an argument and George left Jane and booked himself into another hotel. Jane had described being left with no access to money and unable to contact George. George returned a few days later before the end of the holiday. Jane’s sister was aware of this issue and had offered to help, though Jane was assisted by a north east couple she had met at the hotel until George returned.

- 14.29 Agency contact with Jane was minimal and routine, and mainly related to general healthcare, commensurate with her age and Diabetes condition, therefore, has not been included in the chronology but can be summarised as follows.
- 14.30 In early 2021 Jane had contact with Adult Social Care in relation to home adaptations for her mother. The adaptations were completed, and the case closed in March 2021.
- 14.31 Police had only one historical record where Jane had contacted them in 2010 because an unknown intoxicated female had knocked on her door to say she had been robbed.
- 14.32 Between December 2021 and June 2022 Jane had four face-to-face contacts with Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust. These were in relation to routine medical issues and no concerns were raised.
- 14.33 Between November 2020 and August 2022 Jane had 27 contacts with her GP surgery including 10 face-to-face contacts, the remainder being text messages and telephone consultations. These contacts reflect diabetes related conditions and investigations, contraception, COVID-19 injections and general health monitoring and appointments. In this context they are not regarded as excessive. No concerns were raised or identified.
- 14.34 George had similarly little or only routine contact with agencies.
- 14.35 In 2011 George made an online application for Carers Allowance in respect of Jane's mother to the Department for Work and Pensions. The allowance was granted and continued to be paid until 2022.
- 14.36 Police had no records relating to George except for him calling them in relation to being the victim of criminal damage in 2014. Police had attended and arrested an offender.

- 14.37 In December 2021 George was admitted to hospital due to back pain and difficulty in passing urine, caused by a spinal disc protrusion. George had called an ambulance, and they had transported him to hospital. He was discharged from hospital after 2 days and referred for consideration for surgery. When reviewed in February 2022 he had reported improvement in symptoms.
- 14.38 George had 12 contacts with his GP practice during the timeframe of this review. George's appointments were carried out face to face and via telephone consultations and related to general health conditions, COVID-19 vaccination and referrals relating to his hospitalisation in December 2021 with a back condition. Individual Management Reviews indicated no concerns being raised or noted.

Section 15 Friend, employer, and wider community contributions

- 15.1 The Review chair was given access by Northumbria Police to statements taken during the homicide investigation from friends, work colleagues and neighbours who knew Jane. These statements provided valuable insight and indicated that Jane was friendly, caring, outgoing, sociable, and highly regarded by her friends and work colleagues. The statements were detailed, covered history of the subject and specific references to describing the relationship between Jane and George and whether there was any knowledge of abusive behaviour. The chair discussed the summary of these with Jane's sister who is in contact with several of Jane's friends and she indicated that the accounts as represented in this report were consistent with her knowledge and her own discussions with those

individuals post homicide. The chair concluded that there were no benefits of further speaking to the witnesses.

Section 16 Chronology of key events January 2022 to August 2022

- 16.1 The chronology considers events from January 2022 until the homicide in August 2022.
- 16.2 In January Jane had told friend A that she has met a man and is going to meet him for a drink. She had asked her friend not to think badly of her as she was still with George. She later indicated she was using an internet dating app site.
- 16.3 On May 29th, Jane had met with friend A and told her that she has met a man and that things were serious with him and that he may relocate to be with her. Jane had told the new partner that George was her lodger and that she was going to ask him to move out.
- 16.4 In May or June Jane had disclosed to a friend that she had asked George to leave the home temporarily on 2 occasions. The first time was for a weekend when he stayed with an unknown friend and the second time he had stayed away at a hotel for a week. The accounts indicated that Jane had told George that the relationship was over, and that she was dating other males.
- 16.5 Jane had messaged her sister saying that George is being “*nice as ninepence*”. Jane’s sister described that this was following Jane having told George that the relationship was over and that he was not contributing to the household chores. Jane’s sister indicated that Jane had told her that

this followed a “*heart to heart*” discussion between Jane and George. He had talked about his childhood and problems with his father and indicated that he would make a greater effort, though Jane later indicated that he had not done so.

- 16.6 In June George’s sister had been informed by her bank that George had attempted to cash a cheque she had previously sent to him in 2020 as part of their sister’s estate. The bank informed her that the cheque could not be paid as it was out of date and would need to be reissued.
- 16.7 George had subsequently contacted his sister and left a message on the answerphone that he would call back.
- 16.8 On 13th June Jane had messaged friend A to say that her new relationship was going well, and she was to take a week’s holiday with her new male friend and had indicated that she would ask George to move out.
- 16.9 On the 19th June Jane had messaged her sister to say that she had told George that he would have to leave the house.
- 16.10 On the 21st of June friend A received a message from Jane saying that she had told George the night before that she wanted him to move out and that he had already known something was wrong.
- 16.11 Three days later Jane had cancelled a meeting with friend A as she, “*has some things to sort out*”.
- 16.12 On the 26th of June Jane had messaged friend A to say that her new male friend had ended the relationship.
- 16.13 In June or July Jane disclosed to friend B that she had given George 2 to 4 weeks to move out and that she had told him they could still be friends and she would help him with his shopping. She had disclosed similar

information to friend C who recalled that Jane said that George was agreeable to this though had asked if he could stay on as Jane's lodger which she had declined.

- 16.14 On July 15th a work colleague had accompanied Jane to the bank with the work takings. She had told her colleague that she had met someone new and had told George who had moved out for a few days. The same day Jane had informed her sister via message that George had moved to a hotel for a few days at her request and that he was "*annoyed*". Jane's sister had asked if she was seeing someone else that weekend and Jane replied no and that she had wanted the weekend alone to, "*sort herself out*".
- 16.15 On July 22nd Jane had told friend D that she had asked George to leave again. Jane had indicated that George understands why he was being asked to leave.
- 16.16 Three days later Jane and a work colleague were on an errand for their employer to the bank. The colleague had asked her how George has taken to being asked to leave and Jane responded that she had given him a time frame to move out.
- 16.17 On July 30th Jane met friend D for a coffee and was described as acting her usual self and did not raise any concerns.
- 16.18 The following events all occur over the course of the week prior to the discovery of the homicide.
- 16.19 Six days prior to the discovery of the homicide Jane had met friend C in a local public house for a social evening. No concerns had been raised.
- 16.20 Five days prior to the discovery of the homicide whilst travelling with a colleague to deposit employers takings, Jane had told her colleague of a disagreement with George over carers allowance that George claimed for

her mother. Jane had asked George for some more money towards rent and bills for staying at the house until he found somewhere else to stay but he had refused. Jane had indicated that she would speak to George at the weekend and ask him to leave by the end of the month.

- 16.21 Four days prior to the discovery of the homicide Jane had met her new male friend for a coffee at lunchtime.
- 16.22 Four days prior to the discovery of the homicide Jane's sister and her daughter had visited Jane. Jane's sister indicated that there had seemed to be an atmosphere in the house and when George was out of the room, she described Jane as "*raging*" over the fact that she had asked George for money to contribute to the household and he had refused. Jane had described that she had been to Tesco's with George and was annoyed that he was living in her house for free and that she had asked him for £50 per week but he would only give her £40.
- 16.23 Three days prior to the discovery of the homicide Jane had visited friend B's home for a drink and left at 11pm. Friend B recalled there were had been no issues raised, and that their socialisation was normal. Jane had indicated to friend B that George is going to move out of her house.
- 16.24 Two days prior to the discovery of the homicide Jane had voluntarily gone into work on her day off to cover an hour for her manager who had needed to leave work early. He had described her as acting her normal self. Jane rang friend B to advise she was taking her mother out later but had indicated that she may meet her for a drink in the evening.
- 16.25 Two days later Jane had not arrived for work as usual and had not contacted her manager to state any reason for this. This was regarded as highly unusual, and her manager had been concerned, being aware of

Jane's diabetes. He had tried to contact Jane with no response.

Subsequently a staff member called at her home and got no reply despite her car being on the drive. Police were contacted later in the day and forced entry to the house and found both Jane and George deceased.

Section 17 Overview of information known

- 17.1 Agencies had little or no contact except for health services in respect of routine medical conditions and Jane had attended face to face appointments alone and the Individual Management Review reports confirmed that there were no issues of concern identified or raised in respect of these contacts. The review has therefore focussed on accounts of those that knew Jane and to a lesser extent George.
- 17.2 Jane had been in a relationship and lived with George for 18 years though accounts indicate that Jane grew apart from George and viewed him more as a "lodger" in her home.
- 17.3 Jane had an active social life involving family and longstanding close friends. Jane had worked for the same employer since leaving school and was dedicated to and enjoyed her work, being popular and well regarded by colleagues.
- 17.4 George would not socialise and preferred stay at home. He had withdrawn from employment many years previously and Jane had provided accommodation and food. George did not access benefits whilst unemployed though did receive a carers allowance of around £50 per week in respect of Jane's mother and an inheritance from his father's estate in recent years.

- 17.5 George's previous relationship of three years had ended when he had struck his former partner's daughter whilst under the influence of alcohol. He had been described as "*difficult*" to live with. The former partner indicated that he had liked to focus on his own interests whenever he could. This picture also emerged from accounts of his relationship with Jane highlighting that he generally did not socialise with Jane's friends or family.
- 17.6 Throughout 2022 Jane had expressed a wish to "*move on*" with her life and meet new male friends. She had told George this and had asked him to move out on several occasions in the 3 months prior to the homicide.
- 17.7 Those closest to Jane identified that Jane had not experienced domestic abuse or coercive control in her relationship with George, though she had indicated that he was reluctant to leave Jane's home. Jane had become increasingly frustrated at this and had indicated that she would give George a final date to move out and had indicated that she would confront this again in the days before the homicide.
- 17.8 Jane had been found deceased having appeared to have been a victim of an assault. George was also discovered having appeared to have taken his own life.

Section 18 Analysis

- 18.1 Domestic homicide statistics for England and Wales indicate that victims are predominantly female (Office of National Statistics). Between the year ending March 2019 and the year ending March 2021, 72.1% of victims of domestic homicide were female compared with 12.3% of victims of non-

domestic homicide⁵. This picture of a predominance of female victims is reflected in local statistics. Northumbria Police recorded 1,318 incidents of domestic abuse in North Tyneside between July and September 2022 with 75.7% of victims recorded as female.

18.2 Deborah had ended the relationship with George following an incident where he had physically struck her child following him consuming excessive alcohol. Although there were no visible injuries as the blow had been to the back of the head in law this at a minimum constitutes common assault⁶. Deborah's background in her own childhood, living in a home characterised by alcohol and domestic abuse influenced her decision to end the relationship immediately, despite being in the early stages of pregnancy with George's child. Her daughter had later indicated George had also been psychologically and emotionally abusive with her. Research has indicated a correlation between child abuse and domestic abuse and that the presence of one form of violence may be a strong predictor of the other (Goddard & Hiller 1993; Stanley & Goddard 1993; James 1994; McKay 1994; Tomison 1995a; Edleson 1999b)⁷. Whilst we have no evidence of physical abuse from George to Deborah throughout her relationship, they had only lived together for a matter of months and there were some disagreements in their relationship. We can speculate that it may have

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2022>

⁶ Section 39, Criminal Justice Act 1988 – Common assault and battery shall be summary offences and a person guilty of either of them shall be liable to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both. Source legislation.gov.uk

⁷ Exploring family violence, Links between child maltreatment and domestic violence National child protection clearinghouse issues paper published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies NO. 13 WINTER 2000, Adam M. Tomison

developed to abusive behaviour towards Deborah if the relationship had continued and she had not taken steps to end it.

- 18.3 Homicide-suicide is relatively rare in the UK. A recent research study⁸ in England and Wales looking at the 163 domestic homicides that occurred during the initial 12 month period of the COVID-19 pandemic, identified that 13 cases of intimate partner homicide involved homicide followed by the suicide of the suspect. In all 13 cases the victim was female and the suspected perpetrator male. In 7 of the 13 cases both partners were aged 65 or over with none of the suspects previously known to police for domestic abuse and very little agency history of the couples. In younger age ranges there was a greater predominance of recorded inter-personal violence history and agency awareness.
- 18.4 Whilst George was 65 and Jane 54, (which places Jane outside of the older age category definition in the study), the circumstances in relation to the absence of recorded domestic abuse history and limited agency awareness of the couple align closely with the characteristics identified in the study.
- 18.5 Age is identified as an important factor. An academic review of 49 homicide-suicide studies⁹ carried out between 1993 and 2019 indicated that as age increases then the risk of homicide-suicide increases. Additionally, victims are predominantly women and children, and perpetrators male, and homicide-suicide is most likely to occur in the context of recent separation, divorce, or relationship conflicts, with the most

⁸ Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021
Lis Bates, Katharine Hoeger, Melanie-Jane Stoneman, and Angela Whitaker

⁹ *Characteristics of Homicide-Suicide Offenders: A Systematic Review*
Rouchy Emma, Germanaud Emma, Garcia Mathieu, Michel Gregory

likely motivation to be amorous jealousy (indicated in this case by notes left by George at the scene of the homicide).

- 18.6 In this review it has been identified that George was aware of the relationship ending and that he knew that Jane wished to engage in new male friendships and that he would have to find somewhere else to live. Accounts highlighted that he did not want the relationship to end and that he had asked to continue to live in Jane's house. We do not know much information as to why George's earlier marriage in the 1990's had ended though Deborah had disclosed that George only mentioned it once saying that he stated that during sexual intercourse his wife had started to bleed and he "*didn't stop*". His wife had subsequently gone to hospital, and she had ended the relationship soon after. Deborah also indicated that on one occasion George's mother had asked her if George had ever "*hit her*". Deborah had thought it strange to raise this as she had thought it was out of context in the conversation at the time though in hindsight has wondered if George had a history of physical abuse.
- 18.7 Other risk factors identified have less relevance based on the evidence as to what is known about George, such as an early history of adversity during childhood. His sister did describe his referral to education specialists as a child due to being a "*slow learner*", and difficulties in his relationship with his father, however his childhood was also generally described as normal. Deborah, his previous partner, indicated that George had told her that his sister, who had Down Syndrome, had simply "*disappeared*" from home when he was a child with no apparent explanation when she was moved to a residential educational setting, and he had stated to her that this had affected him deeply as a child.

- 18.8 A further common risk factor is identified as a history of legal issues, and whilst George had no recorded criminal history, Jane's family described that post homicide they discovered that he had kept hidden an extensive file of Child Support Agency correspondence requesting financial contributions for his child, and they speculated in hindsight that this may be related to his reluctance to work and desire to retain his inheritance from his father. There were also demands for rent arrears from his previous property prior to George moving in with Jane. George had inherited a substantive sum post 2016. Jane had indicated he was surprised at this as he had been expected to be left out of the Will though at the time of the homicide there was evidence that this had been spent.
- 18.9 Of significant relevance to this review are the findings that exposure to stressful and/or traumatic events shortly before the homicide, such as separation are a key risk factor. George was aware that the relationship had ended, and he had at least 2 temporary moves to a hotel at Jane's request in the 2 month period prior to the homicide. Jane wanted to "move on" with her life and had told him he could not remain as a lodger and that he must find a new home (though she would continue to be a friend). Research has indicated that separation (either attempted or actual) is an established and prominent risk factor for intimate partner homicide¹⁰. The 2020 Femicide Census¹¹ indicates that 37% of victims killed by a current or former partner were reported to have separated or taken steps to separate from the men who killed them and that 38% of victims were killed within the first month.

¹⁰ Dobash, R.E., & Dobash, R.P. (2016) Contacts with the Police and Other Agencies Across the Life-Course of Men Who Murder an Intimate Woman Partner. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 10(4): 408-415.

¹¹ https://www.femicidecensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/010998-2020-Femicide-Report_V2.pdf

- 18.10 Another meta review (which summarises findings of available studies and literature)¹² indicated similar findings, however also identified some further factors of note in that perpetrators of homicide–suicide were less likely to be influenced by alcohol or have a history of domestic violence or unemployment than in simple homicides. In addition, a history of attempted suicide was less common among homicide–suicide perpetrators than among suicide perpetrators.
- 18.11 A 2009 review of homicide–suicide literature¹³ indicates that whilst we are often correct to consider past behaviour as an indicator of future behaviour, the perpetrators of homicide–suicide usually had a low rate of criminal behaviour. George had no recorded criminal history however his wife and subsequent partner, Deborah, had not reported abusive behaviours and had ended the relationships with George. This must be considered within the context of the 1990's and early 2000 when victim understanding of abuse were very different.
- 18.12 George had been described by his sister as someone who could appear “down” when he was unemployed, however had indicated that she was not aware that he had ever suffered from depression or mental illness. Post homicide, Jane’s family had found a large quantity of empty alcohol bottles in the cupboard where George had stored his work tools. It was not known if these had recently been placed there. Jane’s sister had encountered George at Jane’s home in the days prior to the homicide and

¹² Homicide–suicides compared to homicides and suicides: Systematic review and meta-analysis. Radoslaw Panczak, Michael Geissbu' hler, Marcel Zwahlen, Martin Killias, Kali Tal, Matthias Egger Forensic Science International 233 (2013) 28–36

¹³ Murder–Suicide: A Review of the Recent Literature, Scott Eliason, MD, J Am Acad Psychiatry Law 37:371–6, 2009.

whilst she recalled that she felt that there was an “*atmosphere*” in the house, George had appeared to her as he normally did when she visited.

18.13 General strain theory, (first developed by the Merton in the 1930’s) argues that psychological stress and life pressures can contribute to criminal behaviour and violence and can be a factor in domestic homicide. A 2013 study¹⁴ drawing upon General Strain Theory and partner violence literature indicated that being prevented from (or losing) control, experiencing separation, or suspecting infidelity if not moderated can increase risk of inter- personal violence. This is a particular risk in those individuals who experience intense negative emotions such as anger, rage, and jealousy. The review has identified only limited accounts where George demonstrated a short temper such as whilst staying at his sister’s, and an example whereby Jane’s sister and husband witnessed an incident where George became angry because Jane’s mother had held on to the door of a new car Jane had purchased whilst she was exiting the vehicle. Panel considered these; however, the information was limited, and family and close friend accounts identified that Jane would not accept such behaviour and would have disclosed any incidents or escalation in the period prior to the homicide. Panel also noted that Jane had opportunity in the period before the homicide where she was with friends and away from George to disclose any escalation in behaviour or worries.

18.14 A 2018 study¹⁵ by Michael Linden describes the concept of embitterment as a factor that can lead to an increase in aggression and suicidal ideation. Linden describes embitterment as a common emotion, “*a nagging feeling,*

¹⁴ A General Strain Theory of Intimate Partner Homicide. Eriksson, Li, Mazerolle, Paul
Journal of Aggression and Violent Behaviour

¹⁵ Prof. Dr. Michael Linden
Research Group Psychosomatic Rehabilitation, Charité University Medicine Berlin CBF

involving a mixture of acrimony, anger, animosity, ire, rancour, spite, resentment, and the urge of revenge”, potentially leading in some cases to suicidal ideation and in extreme cases homicide. The Panel found the concept useful, however, had only limited information in respect of George other than he was being asked to leave Jane’s home and to find alternative accommodation and that he had been aware of this for some months.

18.15 Professor Jane Monckton-Smith’s intimate partner homicide timeline¹⁶ identifies eight steps that are present in almost all domestic related homicides. These are shown in the following table using information from this case:

**INTER PERSONAL HOMICIDE
TEMPORAL SEQUENCE**

**(ADAPTED FROM PROFESSOR JANE
MONCKTON-SMITH)**

<p>STAGE ONE: HISTORY OF PERPETRATOR: A HISTORY OF COERCIVE CONTROL, STALKING, INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE OR VIOLENCE</p>	<p>Evidence from George’s previous partner indicated that he had been physically and emotionally abusive to her child and abusive within his marriage prior to that relationship.</p>
<p>STAGE TWO: EARLY RELATIONSHIP: A RELATIONSHIP THAT OFTEN BEGINS AND PROGRESSES RAPIDLY</p>	<p>George moves in to Jane’s home even though she indicates to her sister that she is “unsure”. When Jane purchases her next home, she does so solely in her name.</p>

¹⁶ Monckton Smith, J. (2020) Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track and Eight Stage Progression to Homicide Violence Against Women 8 476–494

STAGE THREE: RELATIONSHIP: A RELATIONSHIP DOMINATED BY CONTROLLING TACTICS AND IPA

Jane reported to family, friends, and colleagues that she is dissatisfied with her relationship. George was not contributing financially or to household tasks though there was no evidence of violence. George is asked to leave the house on two occasions which he does temporarily but returns.

STAGE FOUR: TRIGGER: AN EVENT THAT SIGNIFICANTLY CHALLENGES CONTROL – THE MOST COMMON BEING SEPARATION

In the months prior to the homicide Jane makes George aware that the relationship has ended, she wishes to explore new relationships and that she wants him to leave.

STAGE FIVE: ESCALATION: AN ESCALATION IN CONTROLLING TACTICS AND NEGATIVE THOUGHTS TO COUNTER THE CHALLENGE AND RESTORE CONTROL

George makes no attempts to move out of Jane's home. He asks to remain at the house as a lodger, which Jane had declined. George refuses to pay £50 per week towards household expenses and this had possibly increased tensions. At this time Jane indicates to a colleague that she will give George a final deadline by which to leave her home.

STAGE SIX: HOMICIDAL IDEATION: INCREASING MOVE TOWARDS SEEING HOMICIDE OR HOMICIDE/SUICIDE AS THE ANSWER TO RESOLVING THE ISSUES

There were no outward signs of this though panel considered that George was 65 years old, not working, had no independent income or savings and was determined not to leave and for Jane to continue to provide him with a home. He does not accept Jane's indication that the relationship has ended and considers

	Jane's interest in establishing a new relationship as infidelity.
STAGE SEVEN: PLANNING: PLANNING FOR THE HOMICIDE – CAN BE INTRICATE OR BROAD PLANS	There was no visible evidence of active or pre planning.
STAGE EIGHT: HOMICIDE: CAN INVOLVE THE PARTNER OR OTHERS, AND THE PERPETRATOR	George assaults Jane and then takes his own life.

18.16 Dr Monckton-Smith identifies that the length of time between stages can vary but typically between stage four and stage eight it is between two to four weeks. In this case we see an escalation from notification of separation to homicide of around 8 to 12 weeks. Intervention during this period can change the course of events, though in this case there was no opportunity to do so as agencies were not aware of the relationship and Jane and her family and friends had no knowledge of any prior history of George or awareness of the increased risks associated with separation.

Section 19 Conclusions

- 19.1 The terms of reference and specific requests for the agencies providing Individual Management Reviews and chronologies were fully addressed.
- 19.2 There were no missed opportunities for any agency or family or friends to intervene. There were no known indicators that George would kill Jane and himself.
- 19.3 This report describes and analyses the events which led up to the fatal incident and the panel were able to identify that there were only limited accounts and no formal recording of any domestic abuse or coercive control history in the 18 years of the relationship prior to the homicide. In interview (post homicide) neighbours had reported occasional raised voices from Jane's property, however, they had also stated that they thought these were "normal" disagreements. Family and friends had indicated that they considered that the relationship was not abusive in nature as they felt certain that Jane would have disclosed in her close and regular private contact with them. Deborah who had the previous longer-term relationship with George had highlighted a single incident of his physical temper regarding her child though indicated that George had never been abusive to her though she thought he was capable of doing so as a physically large male.
- 19.4 The panel did consider that there were a very small number of examples of behaviour throughout the 18 year relationship with Jane which could be considered within the context of control or attempts at controlling behaviour. The most significant being when George had abandoned Jane after a disagreement whilst on holiday abroad with no money or contact details. Other examples were apparent however where less obvious

indicators could be interpreted as more subtle controlling behaviours, such as not contributing to home tasks, deciding to withdraw from employment, not contributing financially when asked, and a reluctance to socialise with Jane's family and friends.

- 19.5 The panel deliberated that whilst professionals could consider in hindsight the incident regarding the holiday as indicating abusive and controlling behaviour, the other examples evidenced by the review were too limited to draw conclusions. Panel discussed these issues at length and on balance were conscious of "*hindsight bias*", whereby events can be overestimated in terms of their significance once the outcome is known.
- 19.6 It is important to note that Jane and those who knew her probably may not have considered them as potentially controlling or coercive behaviours. Awareness of behaviours constituting controlling or coercive behaviours is growing, however, the Panel could not identify enough evidence to indicate serious alarm or distress which would have had a substantial effect on day-to-day activities, or any link to threats or fear of violence. All accounts from family and friends described Jane as being very much in control of what she did in life, and all felt sure that Jane would have disclosed fear or threat. Nonetheless Panel considered that some of George's behaviours could be interpreted in hindsight to attempt to "*control*" in a way that allows him to choose his lifestyle within the relationship.
- 19.7 The review identified no barriers to Jane reporting domestic abuse and the view of family and friends who were close to her is that she would have told them if she had experienced this. (Terms of reference – key lines of enquiry 1/2/5). Violence Against Women and Girls is a core partnership priority in North Tyneside and consequently specialist services and advice for women

and girls experiencing abuse are accessible, well developed, and promoted across the Borough.

- 19.8 The review found that Jane had limited contact with agencies, she had been employed and was financially independent. Her contacts had been limited to routine health issues and no concerns were ever raised or recorded in relation to her interactions with her GP or local hospital services. Jane was seen alone in her appointments and opportunities were available if she had wished to disclose abuse or relationship difficulties. George's contact with agencies was equally limited and services were responsive to both Jane and George in those contacts. (Terms of reference - key lines of enquiry 3).
- 19.9 No agencies were aware of suicidal ideation in respect of George and there was no evidence that this was apparent to Jane or her family and friends. (Terms of reference - key lines of enquiry 4).
- 19.10 There was no evidence that the relationship was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic though Jane's sister had speculated that because COVID-19 had prevented the couple from their regular meals out and holidays, this may have reinforced Jane's concerns that she wished to end the relationship with George. There was no evidence that services such as health were not accessible to either Jane or George during that period. (Terms of reference - key lines of enquiry 5).
- 19.11 On March 20th, 2020, the Prime Minister announced a UK-wide partial lockdown¹⁷ in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no evidence that the lockdown affected the relationship with George. Jane's sister

¹⁷ This was followed 3 days later by the introduction of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/350)

indicated that because George lived a life where he stayed up at night on the internet and rarely went out, she did feel he wouldn't have been adversely affected by lockdown. She did however say that when the Government announced on 25th March 2020 that builders' merchants could open as an essential retailer, she received a text from Jane that she was "delighted" to be returning to work. In effect therefore Jane returned to her employment as a key worker within a week of lockdown. Jane's sister did indicate however that lockdown ended the holidays and meals out, and that may possibly have led Jane to further re-evaluate the relationship.

19.12 Accounts given by Jane to her sister and friends indicated that the relationship with George had faded out over recent years though he remained resident in her home.

19.13 Jane had described wanting to the end the relationship for a period of months and had asked George to leave on several occasions in the 3 month period prior to the homicide. She had reportedly wanted to be sure that George would be ok and have somewhere to live, however George had displayed a reluctance to leave. This had clearly been difficult for Jane, and she had indicated that she would give a final ultimatum for George to leave in the days prior to the homicide.

Section 20 Lessons to be Learnt

20.1 Common factors found in domestic abuse and domestic homicides, such as a prior history of domestic abuse are not always visible or present. This review highlights that there was no known history of domestic abuse or coercive behaviour towards Jane other than a single incident. Jane had several close relationships with a longstanding group of friends and was extremely close to her sister. Whilst she would readily share her feelings,

she had never highlighted any concerns or fear in relation to George in the 18 years they had lived together. The review did evidence some accounts that George's earlier relationships and his family relationship indicated a potential conflictual temperament and abusive behaviour and violence such as Deborah's account of taking the decision to end her relationship with George following him striking her daughter whilst under the influence of alcohol. The later disclosures that George had been emotionally abusive to a child whilst acting in loco parentis was also of note. Significantly, these behaviours were not known to Jane, her family, friends, or agencies.

- 20.2 In regard to the relationship between Jane and George circumstances had become increasingly conflictual when Jane had asked George to leave her home and he had become aware that she wished to engage in new relationships. Jane had indicated that despite having asked him to find new accommodation he had not progressed this and she had disclosed to a colleague that she would tell him again over the weekend that the homicide occurred. We know that separation or intention to separate is a critical factor that increases risk of domestic abuse escalation and homicide. Whilst agency and service awareness of this is widespread it is apparent from this review that families, friends, work colleagues and the wider community were not aware of these risks and that is a significant barrier to enabling intervention and safety planning. The review concludes that we must ensure that agencies drive wider community understanding that separation is a critical factor in relation to a significant increase in risk of domestic abuse and that this can be where previously those closest to an individual would consider a risk of abuse to be negligible.
- 20.3 Men commit most homicide-suicides, and it generally occurs in the context of separation, divorce, or relational conflict. Victims of the homicide are

predominantly female. Depression is a key vulnerability. Risk is greatest in the Intra-familial setting and when the victim and perpetrator are in proximity. Age is a factor and perpetrators of homicide suicide are older in profile than general homicide perpetrators and are less likely to have a history as a domestic abuser.

- 20.4 This creates some assistance in profiling risk. Agencies in this DHR had no indications of risk but for the future, assurance should be sought that they are aware of these factors. They may for example see presentations of patients or service users that may alert them to potential risks for example, middle aged males who are recently separated or facing separation, or for example older care givers whose health deteriorates. The Home Office is currently developing a searchable repository of DHRs. This will be of assistance in furthering our understanding in England and Wales in respect of homicide-suicide.
- 20.5 Although not evidenced in this case the panel considered more widely the barriers of perceived thresholds to friends and family seeking professional advice when they may be unsure if they should have concerns. A recent innovative service development is being developed in the north east and will provide a platform for family or community members to relay concerns about potential victims of abuse.¹⁸
- 20.6 There was no single agency learning identified during this review process.

¹⁸ Wearside Women in Need, working with Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse ([AAFDA](#)), which will use an investment of £500,000 to tackle domestic abuse through an innovative new approach in the North East.

The new initiative will work with communities to increase understanding of abuse and how to safely and effectively help the people you care about. It will focus on equipping family, friends, and the wider community with the skills they need to ensure their voices are heard. The project aims to improve the way services work with families, friends, and the wider community, so that the lifesaving information which they often have, can be shared, and acted on effectively.

Section 21 Review Recommendations

Recommendation 1

That the Domestic Abuse Partnership ensure that there is professional and community awareness, that the escalation to abusive behaviours and most serious violence is a significant risk in relationships that are ending, even where there may be no known prior history of abusive behaviour.

Recommendation 2

That the Domestic Abuse Partnership and Safeguarding Adult Board provide assurance that domestic abuse and adult safeguarding training provides frontline staff with skills to understand the profile and risk factors associated with homicide-suicide.