

7 MINUTE BRIEFING

Domestic Homicide Review Learning

BACKGROUND

Jessica (aged 43) died in September 2022 following a prolonged period of coercive control, neglect, deteriorating physical health and alcohol misuse within an intimate partner relationship. She lived with her partner, who was unemployed and financially dependent on her. Despite multiple contacts with police, health, adult social care and substance misuse services, the cumulative risk was not fully recognised, and opportunities for coordinated intervention were missed.

KEY INFORMATION

- Domestic abuse involved coercive control, economic and emotional abuse, and neglect.
- Multiple vulnerabilities: epilepsy, declining health, isolation and alcohol misuse.
- Agencies addressed single issues rather than the escalating pattern of harm.
- Repeated refusal of support was often treated as choice, not possible coercion/fear.
- Key information sat across agencies but was not consistently shared or joined up.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Coercive control can be missed when focus on physical injury or single incidents.
- Economic abuse must be identified/responded to.
- Disengagement should trigger professional curiosity, not case closure.
- Health deterioration, substance misuse and domestic abuse interact and compound risk.
- Effective safeguarding requires timely information sharing and multi agency coordination.

ACTION POINTS

Build workforce knowledge of coercive control and economic abuse.
Make domestic abuse enquiry routine in relevant services.
Improve safeguarding information sharing, even without consent.
Use holistic assessment where DA, health and substance misuse co-exist.
Act on concerns raised by families and professionals.

GOOD PRACTICE

- Use of safeguarding processes when Jessica's condition significantly deteriorated.
- Recognition by some practitioners of domestic abuse and offers of specialist support.
- Post review commitment by agencies to strengthen training, supervision and policy frameworks.
- Family involvement in the review, ensuring the victim's voice informed learning

SUPPORT & RESOURCES

- Local specialist Domestic Abuse Services / IDVA support: Cranstoun DASS 0118 402 1921
- Adult Safeguarding referral pathways
- Substance Misuse Services (with DA informed practice)
- Local authority domestic abuse web pages and community resources

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Would I recognise coercive control or economic abuse in this situation?
- How do I respond when someone repeatedly declines support?
- What information does my agency hold that could change another agency's risk assessment?
- Am I seeing this person's situation as a pattern over time, not isolated events?