

Domestic Homicide Review – ‘Margaret’ Learning Briefing

Background - Margaret was tragically killed by her son at the family home. Margaret died from blunt force trauma. Immediately after the killing of his mother, Jack attempted to kill his father, who had sought to protect himself by running to the bathroom and locking the door and called 999. He did, however, still sustain serious life changing injuries. Jack pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of his mother by reason of ‘diminished responsibility’ and the attempted manslaughter of his father at Stafford Crown Court in March 2024. Jack was sentenced to a ‘Section 37 Hospital Order’ with a ‘Section 41 Restriction Order’ under the Mental Health Act.

Positive and Proactive Steps

Strong multi-agency progress has been made to address all three recommendations, with clear evidence of proactive improvements and embedding of good practice.

Recommendation 1, agencies have strengthened the consistent use of DASH through dedicated quality assurance processes, improved training, and enhanced multi-agency working, including MARAC oversight. Systems such as the Police Vulnerability Hub and electronic integration within health services demonstrate that DASH is now routinely reviewed and increasingly embedded in practice.

Recommendation 2, a clear ‘Think Family’ approach has been established. The introduction of child risk assessments, daily oversight, and multi-agency scrutiny ensures children are consistently identified and safeguarded in line with the Domestic Abuse Act (2021).

Recommendation 3, West Mercia Police have improved the identification and response to domestic abuse within call handling through updated policies, a strengthened triage model, increased supervisory oversight, and targeted staff training.

Overall, actions show a coordinated, approach to the learning. It is also important for relevant teams to use the Learning Reflections Tool to help embed learning at a team level.



Process

This then led to a Domestic Homicide Review so partner agencies could learn the lessons from these sad series of events and apply them to future practice. Immediate safeguarding actions were implemented. The review panel was made up of practitioners involved with the case alongside managers from across the partnership and met formally three times throughout the process, with additional theme specific meetings taking place in between. Contact was made with family and friends to allow opportunity for them to contribute to the review if they wished. The report was submitted to the Home Office for their quality assurance and feedback.

Recommendations and Learning

The recommendations made following the conclusion of the review were:

- West Mercia Police, West Midlands Ambulance Services, Adult Social Care and Mental Health services to ensure that their staff are able to identify domestic abuse and coercive control risks using an approved multi-agency risk assessment checklist such as DASH, which should then be audited with the outcomes reported to the Community Safety Partnership until all can evidence, they are an embedded process. There was further learning about how best to work with the family to hear the level of family concern when Jack was relapsing.
- The above risk assessments should reflect the Domestic Abuse Act (2021) and include all family members, especially children connected to the individuals involved.
- The Right Care Right Person Guidance for Call Handlers in West Mercia Police to identify indicators of domestic abuse and the risk to others even where a psychotic episode is noted is reviewed by West Mercia Police in light of this case.
- The Panel requested that the Home Office review the current data on the use of crossbows in domestic manslaughter or ‘near misses’ to establish if the position adopted in 2019 concerning crossbows remains, that they do not pose a threat. **This has been accepted by the Home Office who confirm they are introducing stronger controls for crossbows including a licensing scheme for existing owners and a ban on sales**