

Domestic Homicide Review – ‘Sarah’ Learning Briefing

Background

Sarah was a 56-year-old White British woman living in Telford with her husband, Luke, and their children. She had also raised older children from a previous relationship and was described by family as caring, dedicated, and family-focused. Sarah and Luke had been in a relationship for around 19 years but were in the process of divorcing at the time of her death. The family had minimal contact with statutory services and no recorded history of domestic abuse. In September 2024, Sarah was found deceased at the family home, having died by suicide. Handwritten notes left at the scene suggested that Sarah experienced coercive and controlling behaviour within her relationship, which she perceived as a significant contributing factor to her death.

Recommendations and Learning

- The limited interaction time between General Practitioners and patients can create challenges in fostering an environment where patients feel comfortable and able to disclose domestic abuse.
- Coercive control in domestic abuse remains a significant concern following separation. It is essential that professionals receive appropriate training to identify, understand, and respond effectively to coercive control in post-separation contexts. Consideration must also be given to the effects on victims, including children, to safeguard their safety and well-being after separation.
- The Cut It Out campaign acknowledges that clients often deeply trust their hairdressers, barbers, and beauty therapists and confide in them.
- Services and organisations must persist in their efforts to dispel myths and increase awareness of domestic abuse, as well as promote support services within our communities.



Process

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) was commissioned following the referral in autumn 2024. The review involved a multi-agency panel, practitioner engagement, family consultation, and independent oversight. The final report was submitted to the Home Office in October 2025, with quality assurance feedback received in June 2026.

Key Message for Frontline Staff

Domestic abuse and coercive control may be hidden, particularly during or after separation. Stay professionally curious, recognise that trusted community members may receive disclosures first, and ensure victims and families are aware of the support available.

Positive and Proactive Steps

Partners have taken early, positive steps to strengthen how we respond to domestic abuse, with a clear focus on improving awareness and prevention. Work is underway to update training so staff can better recognise and respond to coercive control after separation, with lived experience shaping the content to keep it real and relevant.

Digital telescreens in GP waiting areas will now be used to promote domestic abuse services and the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme DVDS \(Clare's Law\)](#) to reduce the reliance on victims picking up leaflets which could expose them to further risk if found by the abuser.

The local college has welcomed incorporating Cut it Out training into their curriculum moving forward. And a day has been secured within the White Ribbon 16 days of action timetable, to focus on training opportunities for professions such as hairdressers, beauticians, tattoo artists etc.

West Mercia Women's Aid have developed an awareness raising video about being an 'up stander' rather than a 'by stander'.
<https://youtu.be/LyOFb2dkO0>.

Together, these actions show a strong, proactive approach to improving understanding, reaching more people and keeping victims safer.