

# Sandwell Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) – Key Learning Points

## What happened?

This review concerns a 34-year-old Indian woman who was killed by her partner in 2012 after she disclosed to him that she was ending their relationship. Little was known about the perpetrator. He was living in the UK illegally and had no known involvement with any services. The victim had met and confided in the perpetrator at her workplace and moved in with him after leaving her husband.

She had come to the UK in 2009 to marry. Her husband abused alcohol, had been married previously and had been violent towards that partner. Punjabi was her first language and she did not speak English. She had telephone contact with her family and disclosed that she was being abused by her husband, but she was expected to remain in the relationship. Her husband was violent towards her and raped her. She disclosed this to her GP but there were language barriers and, instead of using an interpreter, the GP invited another patient to interpret for the victim. The GP also did not respond appropriately to her disclosures and did not follow local safeguarding procedures and provide her with appropriate support.

The victim reported to the police that her husband physically abused and raped her. She was forensically examined but decided not to continue with the investigative process after waiting 5 hours to be interviewed. She was offered specialist domestic abuse support but declined this service.

Police should have referred her case to MARAC but did not do so. The perpetrator was convicted of her murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

For a copy of the report contact [domesticabuse\\_admin@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:domesticabuse_admin@sandwell.gov.uk)

## What were the main issues?

- **Her disclosures of rape and domestic abuse were not taken seriously/ appropriately dealt with**
- **Inappropriate response to rape and domestic abuse by Police, A&E and GP**
- **Lack of use of interpreters**
- **Risk assessment – no referral made to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference)**
- **Agencies did not provide support for the victim**
- **Police closed case when victim did not pursue rape allegation**
- **Husband's alcohol misuse not dealt with appropriately – no consideration of safeguarding for victim**
- **Lack of awareness of domestic abuse support services**
- **Perpetrator's controlling behaviour**

## What are the lessons to be learned?

- *Impact of alcohol misuse on other family members should be considered*
- *The use of interpreters is needed when English is not first language.*
- *Any agency can refer high risk cases of domestic abuse to MARAC*
- *Need to act on disclosures of abuse – get advice from your agency's safeguarding lead if necessary and take appropriate action*

## DHR report recommendations

Wolverhampton and Sandwell Drug and Alcohol Action Teams, in commissioning alcohol support services, should ensure that there are clear links to the prevention and reduction in domestic violence by the providers.

Safer Sandwell Partnership (SSP) requests Black Country Cluster disseminates guidance 'Responding to Domestic Abuse' from Royal College General Practitioners dated June 2012, and ensures GPs' compliance within 12 months.

West Midlands Police review the way complaints of serious domestically related offences are investigated and ensure compliance with the NPIA Guidance on Investigating Domestic Abuse, especially regarding cases where the complaint is withdrawn.

SSP and Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP) seek assurance that there exists within all agencies a robust policy for providing interpreting service.

SSP and SWP ensure a clear referral pathway to MARAC for high risk victims is devised and disseminated to agencies.

SSP seek assurance from SWP that all relevant agencies are aware of the referral to Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum (WDVF) process and that each agency has knowledge of the Forum's guidance.

SSP formally writes to the UK Government requesting a review of the criteria and threshold for allowing foreign nationals permission to enter the UK without consideration of a risk assessment of the applicant and sponsors, especially regarding domestic violence and sexual abuse.

SSP should ensure that systems are in place to evidence the progress in relation to the recommendations made in this report.