

Sandwell Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) – Key Learning Points

What happened?

“Lena” was a 43-year-old Polish woman who was killed by her partner in 2015. He had alcohol misuse problems and was extremely controlling and violent, although there were no referrals to agencies for Lena to get help and support for this. She had two children, one of whom experienced health issues, for which referrals to GP and other health services were made. The child also had support from school. A health service closed the case when the family did not respond and appointments were not kept. The lack of a coordinated Team Around the Child approach by agencies meant that opportunities may have been missed to better understand what was happening at home and potentially identify domestic abuse earlier.

The perpetrator’s GP made several referrals to alcohol support services but he did not attend. The GP was not made aware of his failure to attend.

Opportunities to potentially identify the risk to Lena and her children and put safeguarding measures in place were missed by agencies dealing with the perpetrator’s alcohol issues.

There was no evidence that an interpreter was used with family members by the GP, as English was not their first language.

Whilst the review found that the death was not predictable or preventable, it identified missed opportunities and lessons learnt.

For a copy of the report contact domesticabuse_admin@sandwell.gov.uk

What were the main issues?

- **The perpetrator’s controlling behaviour**

- **The perpetrator’s alcohol misuse**
- **Lack of safeguarding considerations for the victim and children by those dealing with perpetrator’s alcohol issues**
- **Child’s health needs**
- **Lack of a Team Around the Child approach.**

What were the lessons to be learned?

- *When victims attempt to leave an abusive relationship, risk of harm can increase and they need more support at this time*
- *There is a need to use interpreters with clients/patients where English is not their first language*
- *Officers need to use more professional curiosity e.g. ask questions if a client/patient attends an appointment smelling of alcohol*
- *All professionals who work with those who misuse alcohol need to consider and address safeguarding for other family members*
- *There is a need to ensure that sufficient details about family issues and history are captured when patients register for GP services*
- *Agencies should identify and record details of adults who attend with children for medical appointments*
- *Importance of accurate record keeping by GP surgeries*
- *A robust Lead Professional/Team Around the Child approach may have led to better and more coordinated support for the child and may have uncovered domestic abuse in the household*

DHR report recommendations:

The Lead Professional role should be understood by all local partner organisations and embedded in practice.

SSP Board will work to ensure domestic abuse, alcohol issues and work with Eastern European communities and families is better integrated across partner agencies.

Safeguarding training to be provided for clinicians in primary care on how to approach the impact of alcohol misuse on parenting capacity and the signs, symptoms and behaviours children may display when living in a household where there is domestic abuse.

GPs should be advised about the use of interpreting services (face-to-face or language line)/health and domestic abuse resources in alternative languages should be displayed in all GP practices.

A safeguarding advice and support pathway for primary care to be developed and disseminated to GP practices.

A ‘new to practice’ patient protocol should be developed by GP safeguarding forum for use by practices.

Every GP practice should have a DNA to include ‘Was Not Brought’ (for children) policy.

Children’s health referral processes and policy/standard operating procedures to be reviewed.

Hospitals Trust to raise awareness of domestic abuse and provide training within the organisation. SWBHT to work with Swanswell to support the management of resistant drinkers attending at hospital.