



# **DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW**

**London Borough of Newham  
Case of Adult AA  
Executive Summary**

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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Outline of incident

- 1.1.1 On the afternoon late in January 2014, the ambulance service called the police to a flat in Newham. In the flat they found AA seriously injured suffering from stab wounds and being tended to by members of the public. At the flat, the police found AA's husband, BA. BA admitted responsibility for stabbing his wife, stating it was self-defence. AA was taken to hospital and she died in the operating theatre later that day. BA was arrested and police commenced a homicide investigation. BA was interviewed and stated that his actions were in self-defence. He was charged with the murder of his wife. He appeared before the Central Criminal Court where he was later found guilty of murdering AA and sentenced to life imprisonment.
- 1.1.2 The panel wish to offer condolences to the family of AA for the sad loss of their daughter, sister and mother.

## 1.2 The review process

- 1.2.1 These events led to the commencement of this Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) at the instigation of the London Borough of Newham Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The initial meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014, and there have been two subsequent meetings of the DHR panel to consider the circumstances of this death.
- 1.2.2 The review process took nearly two years to complete. The main delay in the process was waiting for the criminal trial to be completed. BA was convicted some eighteen months after the homicide. The chair took the view that the panel should wait for the court case to be completed before attempting to interview the perpetrator. The second delay was caused through lack of engagement from the immigration services. Despite a number of attempts to gain information on the subjects' dealing with immigration services, the evidence required by the panel was only supplied after the overview report was drafted. This new information resulted in the report being re-written.
- 1.2.3 The DHR was established under Section 9(3), Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.

1.2.4 The purpose of these reviews is to:

- Establish what lessons are to be learned from the domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims;
- Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result;
- Apply those lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate;
- Prevent domestic homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence victims and their children through improved intra and inter-agency working.

1.2.5 This review process does not take the place of the criminal or coroners courts proceedings nor does it take the form of any disciplinary process.

### **1.3 Terms of Reference**

1.3.1 The full terms of reference are included in Appendix 1. The essence of this review is to establish how well the agencies worked both independently and together and to examine what lessons can be learnt for the future.

### **1.4 Methodology**

1.4.1 The approach adopted was to seek Individual Management Reviews (IMRs) from all organisations and agencies that had contact with AA or BA. It was also considered helpful to involve those agencies that could have had a bearing on the circumstances of this case, even if they had not been previously aware of the individuals involved.

1.4.2 Once the IMRs had been provided, panel members were invited to review them all individually and debate the contents at subsequent panel meetings. The final report is a product of that process.

### **1.5 Independent chair**

1.5.1 The independent chair of the DHR is Mark Yexley, a former Detective Chief Inspector in the Metropolitan Police Service with 32 years' experience of dealing with sexual violence and domestic abuse. Mark was the head of service-wide strategic and tactical intelligence units combating domestic violence offenders,

head of cold case rape investigation unit and partnership head for sexual violence in London. He was also a member of the Metropolitan Police Authority Domestic and Sexual Violence Board and Mayor for London Violence Against Women Group. Mark was a member of the Department of Health National Support Team and London lead on National ACPO and HMIC Reference Groups. Since retiring from the police service, he has been employed as a lay chair for NHS Health Education Services in London, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. This work involves independent review of NHS services for foundation doctors, specialty grades and pharmacy services. He currently lectures at Middlesex University on the Forensic Psychology MSc course.

1.5.2 Mark has no connection with the London Borough of Newham. Mark retired from the MPS in January 2011. Although he worked in the department investigating sexual violence there have been structural changes to the MPS since he left the service and Mark has no connection with the teams involved in this case. Mark was previously involved in commissioning and supporting the role of Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) for Open Doors, Sexual Health Service. Open Doors were represented on the panel in an advisory role, they had no contact with the parties in this case. There was no conflict of interest affecting the role of chair.

## **1.6 Parallel and related processes**

1.6.1 There were no parallel review processes.

## **1.7 Contact with family and friends**

1.7.1 The family of AA are not resident in the UK. The panel considered the involvement of the family as a key element of the DHR process. The chair has maintained contact through AA's sister, acting as a representative of the family. This contact has been essential for this review and is particularly relevant given the lack of statutory agency contact with either AA or BA.

1.7.2 AA was known to have lived with a Bulgarian female friend when she first came to the UK. Her family also believe that she stayed with that friend when she separated from BA at the end of 2013. The family have lost contact with the friend and the police have been unable to provide any details of other close friends in the UK. AA did have a very close relationship with her sister, who supported this review. Her sister resides in Germany, but was in contact with AA on a daily basis.

## **1.8 Summary of the case**

- 1.8.1 The victim, AA, was born in Bulgaria in 1986. She had a son, aged eight to nine years, from a previous relationship who still resides with his maternal grandparents in Bulgaria.
- 1.8.2 The perpetrator was born in Pakistan in 1985. He is not known to have had any previous relationships or children. He entered the UK in April 2011 on a student visa and he did not declare that he had any other family in the UK.
- 1.8.3 On 17<sup>th</sup> January 2012 the Home Office were informed by the British Institute of Technology and E-Commerce (BRIT) that BA had failed to enrol for a course. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 2012 BA's leave to remain in the UK was curtailed. His leave to remain was reinstated when BA provided evidence that he had commenced studying at BRIT. The permission to stay was extended to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013.
- 1.8.4 It is believed that AA entered the United Kingdom as a European Union citizen on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012. AA worked as a self-employed cleaner. When AA first arrived in the UK she stayed with people within the Bulgarian community. She stayed temporarily with people she had met through social networking sites and 'sofa surfed'. AA's family believed that she was living with a female friend.
- 1.8.5 It is not known how or when AA met her future husband, BA. They were known to have rented a room together and signed the tenancy agreement on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2012. The room was within a multi-occupancy dwelling in the London Borough of Newham.
- 1.8.6 AA and BA registered with the same GP on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2012. AA had an initial health assessment. This assessment did not cover the subjects of domestic abuse or sexual health.
- 1.8.7 On 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012, AA attended the Royal London Hospital for a cervical smear test. There were no concerns recorded. A check of the records shows that no questions about AA's sexual partners or domestic abuse were asked.
- 1.8.8 The couple were married in the local Mosque and the marriage was solemnized at the Newham registry office on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2012. Police have been able to trace one of the witnesses to the marriage and they did not know BA or AA. Subsequent police enquiries with AA's family have shown that they were aware

that the marriage was motivated by her husband's desire to change his immigration status in the UK.

- 1.8.9 On 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013, BA submitted an application to vary his leave to remain in the UK on the grounds of his marriage to AA. The application was made on the basis of Human Rights Article 8 – Rights to a Family Life.
- 1.8.10 On 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013, BA submitted an application for residency on the grounds that he was a non-European Economic Area (EEA) family member of an EEA National.
- 1.8.11 On 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013 BA's application under the Human Rights Article 8 was refused. BA initially lodged an appeal against the decision and then later withdrew his appeal on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2013 in order to pursue his EEA family member application.
- 1.8.12 On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2013, a joint police, immigration and LB Camden visit was carried out at a licenced massage parlour in Camden. The visit was conducted as part of a planned police operation to visit all known massage parlours in the London Borough of Camden. The main aim of the Operation was to consider the welfare of any workers present. The visit was jointly conducted with staff from the MPS, Camden Social Services and Health and Safety. AA was found to be working at the premises – it was not known in what capacity. AA was found with a large quantity of condoms but denied she was offering any sexual services. The police established that AA was not at the premises against her will. There was no evidence that any criminal offences were being committed at the parlour.
- 1.8.13 AA would keep in touch with her mother through conversations on the Internet using Skype. In September 2013, AA's mother noticed that she had facial injuries. AA said that these had been caused by BA.
- 1.8.14 On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013, the Home Office wrote to BA to request additional information to consider his application for an EEA family member permit. There had been no background information provided on BA's relationship with AA. The Home Office requested AA's passport details, employment details, bank details and details of National Insurance contributions.
- 1.8.15 The additional information requested from BA and his wife was not supplied and as a result the Home Office refused BA's application for a residency card on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2013. On 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013, BA lodged an appeal on this decision. This appeal was later dismissed on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2014 when police advised that BA was in prison charged with AA's murder.

- 1.8.16 The decision to refuse BA's application for residency was based purely on a paper application. The Immigration authorities did not interview BA or AA.
- 1.8.17 AA visited her family at home during Christmas 2013. She said that she was having problems with her relationship with BA and they were living separately. It was believed that AA had separated from BA around September 2013. AA described BA to her family as a jealous man and said she regretted her relationship with him.
- 1.8.18 On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2014, AA told her mother that BA wanted to open a joint bank account. AA said that she was reluctant to open the account and that she was being blackmailed by BA. BA started to send messages to AA's sister and parents through Facebook. He told them that if AA did not help him and sign documents then 'bad things would happen'. AA's sister spoke with her. AA said she was alright and did not expect or fear BA hurting her. When AA was away from home, BA would send messages to her friends and family enquiring where she was. AA's sister believed that BA saw AA as his property.
- 1.8.19 On the day of the homicide, BA had a scheduled appointment at a bank concerning a joint account at 2.30pm. The appointment was cancelled and BA later told police it was cancelled because his wife was in a bad mood. It appears that AA was not willing to open a joint bank account with BA. BA was seen inside a local supermarket with AA at 2.20pm. Shortly before 3.00pm BA ran from the couple's room, approached a woman passing by and told her that he had stabbed his wife. BA told them that his wife had pulled a knife on him during an argument and he had not meant to stab her. The two people gave first aid and called for an ambulance.
- 1.8.20 When the London Ambulance Service arrived with the police they identified three stab wounds in AA's chest, arm and torso. AA was taken to the Hospital.
- 1.8.21 Police officers found BA in a room at the rear of the building. He said "I am her husband, I did it. It was self-defence". BA was arrested.
- 1.8.22 AA died in the operating theatre despite all attempts to save her life. A post mortem later revealed fourteen separate injuries on AA's body caused by a sharp object. She had been fatally stabbed in the heart.
- 1.8.23 BA was interviewed and maintained that he had acted in self defence. He had no recent injuries and no scarring to support his claim. BA was charged with the murder of his wife.

## **1.9 Key issues arising from this review**

### **1.9.1 Preventability**

- (a) The information examined by the panel has not shown that this death was preventable. There were no previously reported incidents of domestic abuse and there were no incidents coming to the attention of statutory agencies that would indicate the presence of abuse. The responsibility for the loss of AA's life lies solely with BA.
- (b) Neither AA nor BA had any previous convictions and there had been no reported incidents of domestic abuse. Contact with NHS services had been through routine healthcare appointments.

### **1.9.2 Procedures and processes**

- (a) This review has not identified any contact or disclosures to NHS or police staff that should have resulted in communication with other statutory partners. There were no disclosures that would have suggested that domestic abuse protocols should have been followed.

### **1.9.3 Increasing awareness and opportunities to disclose domestic abuse**

- (a) There were opportunities when questions could routinely be asked concerning relationships and abuse; these included registration with a new GP, appointments at hospital and police visits to a massage parlour.
- (b) There is no domestic abuse information or advice material available at the GP practice. The provision of information in the waiting area may provide the prompt for a patient to talk to her GP about domestic abuse or to approach specialist support services later. The display of material would also send a message that the practice considered domestic abuse to be important.
- (c) Visits to licenced massage parlours provide an opportunity for police and local authority staff to supply information to women on services available to support victims of gender based violence. It has been a common perception that women working in the sex industry may have been victims of trafficking; the more common areas of sexual and domestic violence should also have been considered. Whilst it cannot



be expected that women would disclose fears to authority figures on the day, the provision of information could facilitate later disclosures.

- (d) The review highlighted good practice in Newham Borough in providing the ISVA service for sex workers provided by Open Doors. Unfortunately, this service is not in operation across all boroughs and there is no similar service available in the borough where AA came to the attention of police on a massage parlour licencing visit.

## **1.10 Recommendations**

- 1.10.1 Recommendation 1: All agencies report progress on their internal action plans generated by this Review to the CSP.
- 1.10.2 Recommendation 2: Newham CCG and Barts Health should ensure that all GPs, Sexual Health Services and gynaecology services are routinely enquiring about domestic and sexual violence. This is of particular importance when registering new patients. There should be clear pathways for referral to domestic abuse services and MARAC. This should be monitored by regular audit and reporting performance on MARAC and Domestic and Sexual Violence referrals to the Newham Domestic and Sexual Violence Board.
- 1.10.3 Recommendation 3: The London Borough of Newham and Newham CCG provide publicity and information leaflets for public facing health services on domestic abuse. This should be targeted at immigrant women to ensure they know their rights and that services believe victims of domestic and sexual violence. This will extend to the Open Doors Service at Homerton Hospital.
- 1.10.4 Recommendation 4: The Metropolitan Police Service review protocols and training for visits to licenced premises where sex workers are present. They should ensure that all staff are appropriately trained to deliver information and support on sexual and domestic violence. This training should ensure an awareness of sexual and domestic violence protocols and the provision of Health Services.
- 1.10.5 Recommendation 5: The Ugly Mugs website is seen as a valuable service that has the confidence of sex workers in reporting attacks by strangers and clients. National Ugly Mugs Scheme should be asked to review how links can be made to

domestic abuse services and encourage reporting on the national website. This could provide a pathway to local domestic and sexual violence services for this hard to reach group.

- 1.10.6 Recommendation 6: The London Borough of Newham and Newham CCG to review how the issue of domestic abuse and relationships can be incorporated into the process of registration and review with GPs, Sexual Health and Genitourinary Services.
- 1.10.7 Recommendation 7: The Home office and NHS England to jointly consider how good practice developed at Open Doors can be implemented in other areas. This would include the development of ISVA services specifically for sex workers and reporting protocols with police services.
- 1.10.8 Recommendation 8: The London Borough of Newham Community Safety Partnership to develop a strategy to engage with immigrant women to ensure that they understand legal rights in the UK and understand the law and reporting processes in the area of domestic and sexual violence.
- 1.10.9 Recommendation 9: The Home Office consider advising that each Community Safety Partnership consider inviting the Immigration Service as associate members to local boards.