



Safer Somerset
Partnership
Feel Safe, Be Safe

Domestic Homicide Review Learning Briefing

Somerset Case 032 (Brian)

Introduction

The Safer Somerset Partnership commissioned a multi-agency learning review to determine what lessons could be learned from the suicide of a male aged 70 years, (pseudonym "Brian"). Specifically, to ascertain if there was any learning for health agencies in how they respond to alcohol misuse, relationships, depression and stress.

In this instance, a formal Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) was not commissioned, because it was unclear that domestic abuse was a factor in the death. The Home Office agreed with this decision and that a learning review should take place.

If you work with adults affected by domestic abuse in Somerset, there may be also additional specific actions and recommendations for your agency and your role. Please discuss with your manager or contact your representative on the Somerset Domestic Abuse Board.

This learning briefing has been published to summarise and share the key findings.

Key Themes From This Review

The chronology of contacts Brian had with several health agencies, highlighted the following 4 themes.

Theme 1—Identification, Assessment and Follow Up

Theme 2—Co-occurrence of Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Domestic Abuse

Theme 3—Assumptions

Theme 4—Suicide and Domestic Abuse

The review panel considered these and identified several learning points which are described on page 2.

Next Steps—Please review these themes and actions and reflect on whether you can change your practice to help more victims of domestic abuse.

In 2021, Somerset County Council are launching digital learning modules for domestic abuse open to all Somerset professionals for free. Go to [Somerset Survivors – Working together to reduce domestic abuse in Somerset](#)



Theme 1—Identification, Assessment and Follow Up

Brian disclosed on several occasions that he was experiencing “relationship difficulties”. He also described behaviours from his ex-partner, which appeared to be financial abuse. But in most instances it’s unclear whether any were explored. The panel agreed that domestic abuse and its impacts may not have been fully considered in both the context of Brian’s age (70 years) and gender (male).

Action For You:

- ◇ Are you confident in recognising the signs of domestic abuse with people who’re aged over 60 years, and also who are male? Do you understand some of the additional barriers that older (and male) victims face in disclosing any type of domestic abuse?

Theme 2—Co-occurrence of Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Domestic Abuse

Brian frequently visited health agencies with issues related to mental health and alcohol misuse. But it appeared that not all options were considered to help him. The impact of these three issues co-existing for Brian were not fully understood by professionals.

Action For You:

- ◇ Are you confident in understanding the impact these 3 issues can have for your clients of ALL ages? And are you able to be “professionally curious” with clients to help engage them in relevant support?

Theme 3—Assumptions

Brian mentioned financial abuse, but the review panel agreed that this type of abuse isn't seen by many professionals as an equal status or impact as other types of abuse (e.g. physical).

Action For You:

- ◇ Do you recognise the signs of financial abuse, the links to emotional abuse and coercion and control, and understand the barriers to victims face?

Theme 3—Suicide and Domestic Abuse

Although Brian mentioned relationship difficulties, they were seen as separate to any mental health issues and not a stressor.

Action For You:

- ◇ Do you understand the links between domestic abuse and mental ill-health and suicide risk? And can you assess these risks and understand the referral pathways?

More Information

Find more information on domestic abuse and local services online at <https://somensetsurvivors.org.uk>

Any questions, please email communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk

