



Safer Somerset
Partnership
Feel Safe, Be Safe

Domestic Homicide Review Learning Briefing

Somerset Case 035 (Deborah)

Introduction

The Safer Somerset Partnership commissioned a multi-agency learning review to determine what lessons could be learned from the death of a female aged 82 years, (pseudonym "Deborah"). Specifically, to determine if there was any learning for agencies response to older people and domestic abuse.

A formal Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) was not commissioned, due to the death being determined to be through natural causes. 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 summarises the key findings. The full report is online at [Domestic Homicide Reviews – Somerset Survivors](#)

Key Themes From This Review

The chronology of contacts Deborah had with several agencies, highlighted the following 7 themes.

Theme 1—Age

Theme 2—Understanding Barriers to Leaving Long-Term Domestic Abuse

Theme 3—Assessing The Risk

Theme 4—Multi-Agency Working

Theme 5—Health and Care Needs and Link To Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse

Theme 6—Response to Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

Theme 7—Understanding of and Responses to Different Types of Domestic Abuse

Key points for each of these can be found page 2.

Next Steps—Please review this briefing 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—Age

- Professionals should ensure they always follow domestic abuse pathways and procedures, when working with an older person suspected of experiencing domestic abuse.

Theme 1—Understanding Barriers to Leaving Long-Term Domestic Abuse

- Professionals should be trained to know how to assess and respond to people in long-term abusive relationships.

Theme 3—Assessing The Risk

- Professionals' skills to be improved to use their judgement to assess risk, and not relying on actuarial assessments which can disadvantage cases involving older people.
- Also to complete DASH assessments irrespective of consent.

Theme 4—Multi-Agency Working

- Safer Somerset Partnership to assess the effectiveness of MARAC for cases of older people and
- determine if the Somerset Safeguarding Adult Board's "What to do if it's not safeguarding" guidance will meet needs of repeat cases to improve multi-agency working.

Theme 5—Health and Care Needs and Link to Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse

- Professionals' ability to recognise domestic abuse even where there are long-term health or care needs to be improved.

Theme 6—Response To Perpetrators of Domestic Abuse

- Improve professionals skills in effectively engaging with perpetrators of domestic abuse, even when they are older.
- SCC Public Health to appraise understanding of Somerset multi-agency response to domestic abuse perpetrators

Theme 6—Understanding Of And Responses To Different Types of Domestic Abuse

- Professional's understanding that sexual abuse is part of domestic abuse and a form of control to be improved.
- SCC Public Health to consider commissioning a re-run of the SARSAS older people and sexual violence campaign

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

