DOMESTIC ABUSE-RELATED DEATH REVIEW & SAFEGUARDING ADULTS REVIEW

LEARNING BRIEF - PATRICIA

Domestic Homicide Review (DHR/DARDR)

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) defines a Domestic Homicide Review as a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse, or neglect.

Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR)

The Care Act 2014 states that a Safeguarding Adults Board must commission a SAR when:

(1) an adult in its area dies as a result of abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected, and there is a concern that partner agencies could have worked more or effectively to protect the adult,

(2) an adult in its area has not died, but the adult has experienced significant abuse or neglect, whether known or suspected.

These multi-agency processes seek to identify lessons to be learnt from the death and prevent harm from happening in similar circumstances in the future. More information on the DHR or SAR process can be found on the KBSP website.

Background Information

Patricia was proud of her career and was a proud pet owner. Patricia was a White British woman and in her 60's when she died from natural causes.

Patricia had been in a long-term relationship and there were concerns regarding domestic abuse.

Patricia was considered vulnerable; she had mobility challenges, was reliant on her partner for care, experienced repeated head injuries and had an alcohol addiction.

Themes: domestic abuse, alcohol dependency, adult safeguarding and mental capacity, information sharing and multi-agency response, and the impact of COVID-19.

Key Learning

The impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic affected Patricia, her partner, and the services supporting them. Restrictions on movement and face-to-face contact increased isolation and created additional barriers to accessing support.

The circumstances of the pandemic demonstrate the importance of flexible and accessible services that can continue to identify and respond to risk during periods of significant disruption.

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Domestic Abuse

Several agencies were aware of the domestic abuse concerns within Patricia's relationship. Different agencies had contact with Patricia at various points and were therefore well placed to contribute to understanding her experiences and the risks she faced.

All agencies have an active role in identifying and assessing domestic abuse risk. Each professional relationship offers a unique perspective which can contribute to a more comprehensive assessment and support plan.

Alcohol Dependency

Alcohol dependency was a significant factor within Patricia's relationship and contributed to wider health and wellbeing concerns. While alcohol is not a cause of domestic abuse, it can increase vulnerability and add complexity to already challenging circumstances.

Professionals consistently offered support in relation to Patricia's alcohol use. This case provides an opportunity to raise awareness of specialist services, including Horizons, and highlights the need to address alcohol-related concerns alongside domestic abuse.

Adult Safeguarding and Mental Capacity

Patricia experienced a number of vulnerabilities, including mobility difficulties, health concerns and reliance on her partner for support. These factors had the potential to increase her vulnerability and affect her ability to access support.

The case illustrates the importance of professional curiosity, consideration of self-neglect, and the use of formal mental capacity assessments where appropriate.

To address these gaps, safeguarding practice must explicitly recognise the unique risks faced by older and disabled adults. This includes targeted training, formal capacity assessments, and the development of age-appropriate, accessible, and disability-aware interventions. Embedding these principles is essential to ensuring all victims receive equitable recognition, protection, and support.

Information Sharing and Multi-Agency Response

The review highlighted the importance of information sharing and multi-agency collaboration in safeguarding vulnerable individuals. Effective information sharing ensures that all relevant parties are equipped with the necessary knowledge to provide targeted and effective interventions. By fostering communication and transparency, services can work together to address complex needs, reduce gaps in support and deliver consistent care.

To strengthen the process for arranging and attending meetings, the Partnership is committed to ensuring that there is internal guidance around their legal right and 'duty to cooperate' (Care and Support Statutory Guidance, 14.63).

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Furthermore, some agencies were unaware that Patricia's case had been heard at MARAC, limiting awareness of the risks at home. Ensuring that relevant agencies are aware of key safeguarding processes and forums, including MARAC, enables professionals to contribute their knowledge, support joint planning and promote a coordinated response to risk.

Good Practice

- Mental Health Liaison Team demonstrated good practice by attempting a mental capacity assessment, considering alcohol use and domestic abuse concerns, and using historical information to inform decision-making despite self-discharge.
- Sirona Care & Health recorded thorough open and honest conversations with community therapists about falls and alcohol use, even when engagement with Patricia was limited.
- Bristol City Council Occupational Therapy completed timely home assessments and offered multiple interventions tailored to Patricia's needs.
- Professionals demonstrated strong safeguarding practice by adapting communication methods and ensuring private conversations with Patricia to support safe disclosure of domestic abuse.
- The NBT alcohol liaison team provided consistent ongoing support, advice, and referrals to specialist alcohol services during hospital admissions.
- Adult Social Care completed multiple Section 42 enquiries and Care Act assessments to respond to risks linked to domestic abuse, health, and alcohol dependency.
- Social work practice reflected good engagement by maintaining ongoing conversations, capturing wishes and feelings, and seeking solutions despite communication challenges with Patricia and her partner.

Recommendations

1) Bristol City Council - Adult Social Care to revise their Safeguarding Protection Planning meeting guidance to strengthen processes, reinforcing a consistent and robust approach to agency invitations and information sharing. A standardised process should be implemented to ensure that all relevant agencies, including specialist services like NextLink, are invited where appropriate, ensuring information is provided by agencies where they are unable to attend.
2) The Bristol MARAC Steering Group to review the information-sharing process to ensure timely and effective communication among agencies. Clear mechanisms should be established to track engagement, address non-compliance, and implement corrective actions where necessary, ensuring the MARAC operates with full collaboration from all relevant services.
3) RCGP to consider reviewing their domestic abuse training and standards and consider how DASH assessments could be routinely undertaken in GP practices.

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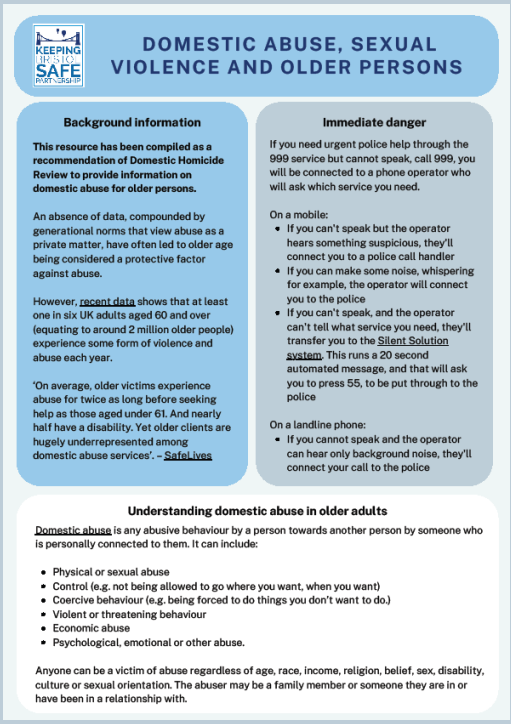
Support

Bristol Horizons

Bristol Horizons is a collaboration between nine community organisations, offering inclusive and accessible support to help anyone in Bristol make informed choices. Horizons offer resources and advice to make positive changes around drugs and alcohol.

Email directly at BristolInfo@horizonsbristol.co.uk or call 03005551469

KBSP Domestic Abuse and Older Persons Resource



KEEPING BRISTOL SAFE PARTNERSHIP

DOMESTIC ABUSE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND OLDER PERSONS

Background information

This resource has been compiled as a recommendation of Domestic Homicide Review to provide information on domestic abuse for older persons.

An absence of data, compounded by generational norms that view abuse as a private matter, have often led to older age being considered a protective factor against abuse.

However, recent data shows that at least one in six UK adults aged 60 and over (equating to around 2 million older people) experience some form of violence and abuse each year.

'On average, older victims experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 61. And nearly half have a disability. Yet older clients are hugely underrepresented among domestic abuse services'. – SafeLives

Immediate danger

If you need urgent police help through the 999 service but cannot speak, call 999, you will be connected to a phone operator who will ask which service you need.

On a mobile:

- If you can't speak but the operator hears something suspicious, they'll connect you to a police call handler
- If you can make some noise, whispering for example, the operator will connect you to the police
- If you can't speak, and the operator can't tell what service you need, they'll transfer you to the Silent Solution system. This runs a 20 second automated message, and that will ask you to press 55, to be put through to the police

On a landline phone:

- If you cannot speak and the operator can hear only background noise, they'll connect your call to the police

Understanding domestic abuse in older adults

Domestic abuse is any abusive behaviour by a person towards another person by someone who is personally connected to them. It can include:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Control (e.g. not being allowed to go where you want, when you want)
- Coercive behaviour (e.g. being forced to do things you don't want to do.)
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Anyone can be a victim of abuse regardless of age, race, income, religion, belief, sex, disability, culture or sexual orientation. The abuser may be a family member or someone they are in or have been in a relationship with.

NextLink

NextLink Plus offers specialist domestic abuse support for women, men and children and young people from all communities (including LGBTQ+ and black and minority ethnic).

Call 0117 925 0680,
Text 07407 895620, or
Email
enquiries@nextlinkhousing.co.uk

What to do about self-neglect

If an individual has care and support needs that mean they are unable to protect themselves from self-neglect and they are at risk of, or already experiencing, self-neglect then they may meet the criteria for a Section 42 enquiry under The Care Act 2014. In these circumstances, you should refer the individual into Adult Social Care. You can do this by clicking on the link here: Report suspected abuse (bristol.gov.uk).

Where to find us:

KBSP@ bristol.gov.uk

www.bristolsafeguarding.org

Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership

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