

Action taken following Domestic Homicide Review

A range of measures are being taken to improve the ways agencies deal with adolescent to parent violence after the publication of a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR).

The DHR was carried out following the death of 'Sarah'* in Northumberland in November 2015. Her 16-year-old son 'Michael'* pleaded guilty to her manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and was given an indefinite hospital order.

An independent review was commissioned by the Safer Northumberland Partnership in line with Home Office guidance which seeks to establish what lessons can be learned, if any, where someone has been killed in a domestic homicide.

The review highlighted a number of key areas for agencies to learn from. These were:

- Inadequate assessment and treatment of Michael's mental health.
- Failure to identify domestic abuse, specifically Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse, and to fully recognise the risk posed by Michael.
- Lack of care coordination, full information sharing and a robust multi agency approach to risk management.
- Lack of full exploration of concerns being raised by the family, and lack of consideration given to further support that they may have needed.
- Michael's 'invisibility'
- Lack of consideration given to the interplay between Michael's behaviour and his internet use.

The review identified seven local recommendations, ranging from increased training around adolescent to parent violence (APVA), the need for all agencies to make safeguarding referrals even when they believe concerns have already been raised and a requirement for the views of all relevant family members to be taken into account when assessments are carried out.

The DHR also made a national recommendation that the Home Office considers the current definition of domestic abuse and the age criteria for referral into the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process.

Councillor John Riddle, Chair of Safer Northumberland, said: "This was a truly tragic case and our thoughts continue to be with all those affected by this very distressing incident.

"The Safer Northumberland Partnership accepts both the recommendations and findings of the review, and as a result multi-agency working in the county has developed further.

"These recommendations were put into a joint action plan which is now well underway and continue to be overseen by the partnership."

-ENDS-

Notes for editors:

- * Not the victim's or perpetrator's real names
- The Safer Northumberland Partnership has a statutory duty to carry out domestic homicide reviews.

The purpose of a domestic homicide review is to:

- Establish what lessons can be learned from the domestic homicide and how 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 to change as a result
- Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate
- Prevent domestic homicide and improve service responses for all domestic abuse victims and their children through improved intra and inter agency working