



# DOMESTIC ABUSE-RELATED DEATH REVIEW (DARDR)

## LEARNING BRIEF - ROBERT

### 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.

This multi-agency process seeks 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 process can be found on the [KBSP website](#).

### Background Information

In January 2023, the police and ambulance were called after reports that Robert (pseudonym) had been stabbed by his partner Helen (pseudonym). Robert died at the scene and Helen was arrested on suspicion of murder. A trial at Crown Court found Helen guilty of which resulted in a custodial sentence.

Robert and Helen had been in a relationship since mid-2022. Robert had previously been married and had adult children. Robert was described by family as “a kind, loving and loyal person, his personality would see him be able to make friends wherever he went.”

**Themes:** alcohol use, mental health and domestic abuse (bidirectional).

## Key Learning

### Unconscious gender bias in identifying male domestic abuse victims

The review found that police attended several domestic abuse incidents involving Robert and Helen, offering advice and making arrests on separate occasions. Evidence showed that Robert was predominately identified as the perpetrator of domestic abuse aside from two incidents where he was identified as a potential victim. In one instance, Robert felt able to disclose other occurrences of domestic abuse however felt unable to engage with the police further to support an evidenced prosecution.

This pattern highlights an important area of learning as professionals may hold unconscious biases that make it harder to recognise or respond to male victims of domestic abuse. Research on bidirectional violence – where both partners use violence – is far less understood and studied than cases involving a single primary aggressor. Ensuring that professionals understand this concept is important so that they are in a better position to challenge and provide appropriate support.

### **The impact of alcohol within a relationship**

Alcohol was a precursor for arguments between Robert and Helen which was identified by professionals on several occasions. Alcohol alone is not a cause of domestic abuse however [Alcohol Change UK](#) highlight many ways in which they are related.

Despite alcohol being an issue for Robert and Helen, there was no known referral to any specialist drug and alcohol use organisation. It is essential that professionals and the wider community are fully aware of the support services available, including how to make a self-referral.

### **Improving recognition of male victims of domestic abuse**

During the review period, Robert disclosed physical abuse by Helen, which sometimes men feel unable to. According to data highlighted by the [ManKind Initiative](#), 21 per cent of male victims of partner abuse in 2022/23 did not disclose their abuse to anyone, an improvement compared to 2017/18 findings showing that around 49 per cent of male victims chose not to disclose their experiences.

This review provides an opportunity to continue to raise awareness within Bristol that males can experience domestic abuse and that they can receive specialist support via [Victim Support](#) (sub-contracted by [Next Link Plus](#)).

### **Understanding the complex dynamics of domestic abuse**

Domestic abuse does not always follow a simple victim–perpetrator pattern. Relationship dynamics, like Robert’s and Helen’s, can shift over time and may involve bidirectional violence or retaliatory violence – violence enacted in response to a perceived threat, harm or provocation.

Professional curiosity is essential for recognising these complexities, helping to ensure assessments are accurate and support is appropriately tailored.

### **Good Practice**

Professionals demonstrated several examples of good practice in supporting both Robert and Helen:

- Police spoke to Robert and Helen separately after reports of assault.
- Support was offered to Robert, including a police referral to the [Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit](#) and a Victim and Witness Care Officer also tried to engage with him.
- Attempts were made to protect both parties through Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs), though enforcement was challenging because they continued to see each other.
- A Treat As Urgent (TAU) police flag was placed on Robert’s phone and Helen’s address.
- Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services supported Helen with debt management and mental health issues.
- Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust made repeated and diverse efforts to engage Helen in mental health support.

## Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1a:** Bristol City Council Public Health and KBSP to raise awareness to professionals to highlight the impact of excessive alcohol use within a relationship and the support and resources available in the area to address excessive alcohol use.
- **Recommendation 1b:** Bristol City Council Public Health to update KBSP partners on the new substance use and alcohol support service and referral pathways, once in place.
- **Recommendation 2a:** KBSP to raise awareness of male domestic abuse services and referral pathways with all KBSP partners.
- **Recommendation 2b:** Agencies within the KBSP to embed within domestic abuse training bidirectional and situational couples' violence to ensure professionals understand the dynamic nature of domestic abuse.

## Support

### Domestic Abuse

If you're in danger and need immediate assistance:

- Call 999.
- If you cannot speak or make a noise, and the operator cannot determine what service you require, you will automatically be transferred to the Silent Solution system. You'll hear a 20-second automated message asking you to press 55. Pressing 55 lets the police know you need urgent help without having to speak.

In Avon and Somerset, [Victim Support](#) provide a free, confidential service for men aged 18 and over who are experiencing domestic abuse in Bristol. Support is delivered by Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) who can help with safety planning, emotional support, and accessing further services.

### Drugs and Alcohol

[Bristol Horizons](#) is a collaboration between community organisations, offering inclusive and accessible support to help anyone in Bristol make informed choices about their wellbeing.

Email [BristolInfo@horizonsbristol.co.uk](mailto:BristolInfo@horizonsbristol.co.uk) or call [0300 555 1469](tel:03005551469).

### Mental Health

If you're in a crisis:

- Call 111 for urgent medical help.
- Call 116 123 to speak to the Samaritans for emotional support.
- Contact your GP for an emergency appointment or [find a GP via NHS Choices](#).

### Contact Us



[KBSP@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:KBSP@bristol.gov.uk)



[www.bristolsafeguarding.org](http://www.bristolsafeguarding.org)



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