

SAFER LEEDS

DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW

Report into the homicide of

Poppy Devey Waterhouse

Aged 24

on 14th December 2018

Independent Chair(s) and Author(s)

Ray Galloway (1)

and

Theresa Breen (2)

Section	Title	Page no
	Contents page	
1	Introduction	1
2	Timescales	4
3	Confidentiality	5
4	Terms of Reference	6
5	Methodology	8
6	Involvement of Family, Friends, Work Colleagues, Wider Community	11
7	Contributors to the Review	22
8	The Review Panel Members	24
9	Author and Chair of the Overview Report	25
10	Parallel Reviews	27
11	Equality and Diversity	27
12	Dissemination	29
13	Background, Overview and Chronology	29
14	Analysis	43
15	Conclusions	53
16	Learning	55
17	Recommendations	55

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Poppy's family wanted to express their thoughts of Poppy. They state:
- 1.2 ***Poppy was a young woman with so much going for her. She was greatly loved and was herself very loving. With her personality and talents, she had so many opportunities open to her, and would have gone on bringing joy and doing good to others, as she had throughout her life.***
- 1.3 ***She made her parents so proud of the person that she had become. As an incredible big sister, she was a best friend, a role model and also an unwavering source of support, always there for her brother.***
- 1.4 ***At the age of 24, Poppy was excited about the next chapter of her life that she was about to embark upon - but which instead was so cruelly and senselessly cut short, and the world lost someone who deserved so much more from life for everything that she gave for others.***
- 1.5 This domestic homicide review (DHR¹) report is compiled in response to the death of **Poppy Devey Waterhouse** (hereafter Poppy) on Friday 14th December 2018, and examines agency responses and anything known by them about Poppy prior to that time.
- 1.6 The circumstances of this case satisfied the criteria to conduct a DHR which included the definition of domestic abuse². It also explored behaviours experienced by Poppy. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is a continuing act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim³.
- 1.7 Her ex-partner, John was arrested and charged with her murder. The author chose a pseudonym³ for the perpetrator. He gave numerous totally dishonest accounts to the police following his arrest. John initially pleaded not guilty to Poppy's murder, later

¹ Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) were first introduced in April 2011. They were established on a statutory basis with specific criteria set out under section 9 (1) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004). A DHR means a review of the circumstances in which the **death of a person aged sixteen or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse, or neglect** by— **a person** to whom she was related or **with whom she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship**, or a member of the same household as himself, held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death.

² The new definition states that domestic violence and abuse is: 'Any incident or pattern of incidents **of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse** between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional'.

³ Pseudonym: a [fictitious](#) name, especially one used by an author. In this case a name used to anonymise the people referred to throughout this report.

changing his plea to guilty on 12th April 2019 at Leeds Crown Court. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and told that he must serve a minimum of 16 years and two months.

- 1.8 Poppy's family wanted her real name to be used throughout this review. Poppy was a young professional woman, who was resident in a shared flat in Leeds city centre at the time of her murder. She was a much-loved daughter, sister, friend, and colleague.
- 1.9 In this report, there is some distressing information about the violent offence where Poppy lost her life. Poppy's family were insistent that the ferociousness of the injuries sustained during the attack should be described, to give full context to their daughter's last moments and to ensure the murder and John's actions should not be minimised. They were also clear that the specific elements of 'overkilling' be prominent in the narrative. Overkilling involves 'the use of excessive, gratuitous violence beyond that necessary to cause the victim's death.' This will be discussed in the analysis section of this report.
- 1.10 The panel considered the appropriateness of including the detail of the violence used but considered it highly relevant because of the wishes of Poppy's family, the nature of the offending and, specifically John's refusal to accept responsibility coupled with his false accounts. The evidential facts of this case disproved the accounts John gave and therefore it is not proposed to present his false accounts in detail during this report.
- 1.11 One of the operating principles for this review has been to be guided by compassion, and empathy, with Poppy's 'voice' at the heart of the process. Poppy Devey Waterhouse was loved and treasured by her family and many friends. Her voice will be prominent through their descriptions, observations, and commentary on her life. As this report is compiled, the Review Panel would like to express its sympathy to Poppy's parents and brother, her wider family and, also her friends and colleagues for their loss. This was an appalling and shocking tragedy for the family, and through the Chair, the Panel offer heartfelt condolences for their loss.

2. Timescales

- 2.1 The Safer Leeds Partnership acts as the city's Community Safety Partnership (CSP). West Yorkshire Police notified Safer Leeds partnership of the circumstances of Poppy's death on 14th December 2018. In response to this notification, a standard scoping exercise was commenced, although this was slightly delayed by the Christmas and New Year holiday period.
- 2.2 On 24th January 2019, the DHR subgroup, which is the strategic group with regard to all DHR's, met to consider all available information. The group unanimously agreed that a DHR should be commissioned. On 29th January 2019, the Safer Leeds Chair agreed with the recommendation of the strategic group and authorised the commissioning of this review into the murder of Poppy, to be known as DHR 'Q'.
- 2.3 Leeds Domestic Violence Service (LDVS) were consulted as part of this process and agreed with the decision to hold a DHR. It is not known when the Home Office were informed. This has been acknowledged as a lapse in record keeping and corrected in subsequent reviews.

2.4 The review was concluded 13.11.2023.

3. Confidentiality and anonymity.

- 3.1 During the panel meetings, it was specified that **All** information discussed at Domestic Homicide Review Panels is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to third parties without discussion and agreement with the CSP and /or DHR Chair. The disclosure of information outside these meetings (beyond that which is agreed) would be considered as a breach of the subject's confidentiality and a breach of the confidentiality of the agencies involved.
- 3.2 All agencies were asked to adhere to their own Data Protection procedures which include security of electronic data. All submitted documentation was password protected from the outset and passwords were only issued to those directly involved in the Panel process.
- 3.3 During the DHR process, any chronologies and/or IMR's are confidential. In this DHR, information was available only to participating officers/professionals and their respective line managers.
- 3.4 Secure networks were used to transmit documents and where this was not possible, password protection added an appropriate level of security to the documents being shared.
- 3.5 For ease of reference, all terms suitable for acronym will appear once in full, and also in a glossary at the end of the report. The findings of this review are confidential. Information is available only to participating officers/professionals, their line managers and the respective agencies commissioning professionals.

Anonymity and Pseudonyms

- 3.6 Poppy's family were contacted by the initial panel Chair (Ray Galloway- hereafter RG), and they decided that they wanted Poppy's real name to be used during this review. As a result of the use of Poppy's name, the date of the homicide is also included in the report.
- 3.7 The use of pseudonyms is the normal convention to protect the anonymity of individuals and/or families. The initial panel had used 'letters' to distinguish between all other named parties or witnesses referred to. This caused a challenge when reading. The subsequent Author and Chair (Theresa Breen- hereafter TB) reverted to pseudonyms to provide more clarity when reading.
- 3.8 The Chair (TB) therefore chose the pseudonyms for the perpetrator and other relevant parties referred to in this review including friends and work colleagues. All witnesses referred to in this review are consenting contributors. The following pseudonyms listed in the below grid, are used to protect the identities of all other parties referred to in this report, including friends and family.

Pseudonyms:	Relationship to Poppy	Age at time of incident if relevant	Police interview (I/V), statement-MG11 and/or TB I/V
Poppy	N/A	24 years	N/A
John	Ex-Partner- Perpetrator	25 years	Police Interview(s)
John's father	John's father	N/A	MG11- yes
Chloe	Poppy's old school friend	N/A	MG11- yes TB- I/V yes
Liz	Poppy's University friend	N/A	MG11- yes TB- I/V yes
Kath	Poppy's University friend	N/A	MG11- no TB- I/V yes
Hannah	Neighbour	N/A	MG11- no RG I/V- yes
Doug	Poppy's Work manager	N/A	MG11- yes
Harry	Poppy's Senior Manager	N/A	MG11- yes
Tony	Poppy's new boyfriend	N/A	MG11- yes TB- I/V yes
Tara	John's new girlfriend	N/A	MG11- yes
Larry	Work colleague	N/A	MG11- yes TB- I/V yes
Bob	Work colleague	N/A	MG11- yes TB- I/V yes
Gary	Work colleague	N/A	MG11- yes TB- I/V yes
Terry	Work colleague	N/A	MG11- yes

3.9 Poppy was a 24-year-old female at the time of her murder. She was of white European ethnicity.

3.10 John was a 25-year-old male at the time he murdered Poppy. He was of white European ethnicity.

4. Section 4. Terms of Reference (TOR) and Scope of the Review

4.1 The DHR considered the intervention and contacts between agencies and Poppy and John, the subjects of the review, in the two-year period prior to and including the date of the incident, on 14th December 2018. It was stressed that if, in the course of the DHR

enquiries, matters of relevance were identified that occurred outside that two-year period, these were to be included.

- 4.2 When it became apparent to the panel, at a very early stage of the review, that there had been no meaningful and relevant interaction with any of the public or professional agencies involved in this review, it was considered appropriate to embrace the time period that started at the beginning of the relationship between Poppy and John. That relationship began when they were both studying at [REDACTED] University. They met on John's last night there and Poppy was about to enter her final year ([REDACTED]) to complete a Master's degree.
- 4.3 The extension of the time period that was considered to be relevant to the review was to ensure that all relevant and proportionate lines of enquiry could be pursued, particularly as no evidence was to be available to the review from the public agencies.
- 4.4 As the purpose of the DHR is to establish learning, it is not as a means of apportioning blame. The overarching aim of the DHR is to identify ways in which the safety of those who experience violence, neglect, and domestic abuse, in all its forms, can be enhanced by informing future practice and behaviour. It is also to establish what lessons can be learned from the Domestic Homicide regarding the way in which professionals, and organisations worked individually and together to safeguard the individuals who are the subjects of the review.
- 4.5 The review process also seeks to identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted upon, and what is expected to change as a result. Seeking to implement learning, this may include applying lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate. The objective therefore is to contribute to the prevention of domestic violence and abuse homicides in the future, by using relevant findings to improve service responses for all subjects of domestic violence, and abuse, and their children through improved intra and inter agency working.
- 4.6 The review has been conducted in an open and consultative manner, bearing in mind the need to retain confidentiality. Agencies were expected to discover what they could do differently in the future and how they can work more effectively with other partners and to take action to make the necessary changes happen. Discussion, challenge and debate was the focus of the panel with the expectation that Poppy's voice could be heard through the process.
- 4.7 The specific Terms of Reference (TOR) and the principles that underpinned and guided the review can be found as an appendix to this document. In addition to the generic TOR, the following specific elements were considered to examine the events leading up to the fatal incident, including a chronology of the events in question.
 - Review the interventions, care, and treatment and or support provided. Consider whether the work undertaken by services in this case was consistent with each organisation's professional standards and domestic abuse policy, procedures and protocols including Safeguarding Adults.

- Review the communication between agencies, services, friends, and family including the transfer of relevant information to inform risk assessment and management and the care and service delivery of all the agencies involved.
- Identify any care or service delivery issues, alongside factors that might have contributed to the incident.
- Examine how organisations adhered to their own local policies and procedures and ensure adherence to national good practice.
- Review documentation and recording of key information, including assessments, risk assessments, care plans and management plans.
- Examine whether services and agencies ensured the welfare of any adults at risk, whether services took account of the wishes and views of members of the family in decision making and how this was done and if thresholds for intervention were appropriately set and correctly applied in this case.
- Whether practices by all agencies were sensitive to the gender, age, disability, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of both the individuals who are subjects of the review and whether any additional needs on the part of either were explored, shared appropriately, and recorded.
- Whether organisations were subject to organisational change and if so, did it have any impact over the period covered by the DHR. Had it been communicated well enough between partners and whether that impacted in any way on partnership agencies' ability to respond effectively.

5.8 The Author (TB) of the final report did not revise the TOR; however, she was cognisant of the need to recognise the importance of awareness of controlling and coercive behaviour, publicity about services, and training or policy and has addressed these areas in this report.

5. Section 5. Methodology

5.1 A Domestic Homicide Review requires the bringing together representatives from a range of statutory and voluntary sector agencies, including local specialist domestic abuse service agencies, to share information and examine what if anything was known about the victim and/or perpetrator. This group is described as a 'panel' and they attend a range of 'panel meetings' to discuss, with an Independent Chair, to debate the information and challenge professionally to establish learning.

5.2 On 24th June 2019, RG was commissioned as the Independent Chair and Author for the review. The decision to take the review was made in January 2019 and the chair was appointed in June 2019. Leeds CSP have a robust process for selecting reviewers which includes inviting expressions of interest and then interview with a member of our team and a senior member of a partner agency. It is not uncommon for this recruitment and contract process to take several months. TB was later appointed as Independent Chair/Author on 21st April 2023 to review some additional information. This report is therefore a combination of the written work of both of these Chairs and Authors. Where separate conclusions are drawn, this will be explicitly stated.

5.3 On 12th November 2019, the first DHR panel meeting was held in Leeds. It is not clear from the records why there was then a long delay before the first panel meeting, other than to say the lead co-ordinator was on leave for a month during this period. Safer Leeds accepts this

as a learning point and confirm that they now have new tracking arrangements and a shared email in place that would prevent this happening in future.

- 5.4 The attendees included the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) from West Yorkshire Police . The other members of the DHR Panel are detailed in the table below at section 8 ('Contributors').
- 5.5 There are no records in the DHR file of when the family were informed that the review would occur, although they believe they became aware of the DHR process from the police Family Liaison Officer (FLO). They believe they became aware several months after the trial. The usual practice is for Safer Leeds to liaise with the SIO/FLO, and they would inform the family. It is believed that this has greater sensitivity and allows the family to process and ask questions of someone with whom they already have a relationship. The lack of a record of this notification has been accepted by Leeds CSP and is learning for future reviews.
- 5.6 The meeting of the Review Panel during 2020 were impacted by the COVID pandemic and the pressures on services during that period. It is understood that there was guidance from the Home Office to pause the progress of reviews that was issued early in 2020. The second meeting was in September 2020 and the final meeting that approved the draft report was in March 2021. During 2021, the lead co-ordinator had a lengthy period of absence due to ill health and the review was not progressed in his absence. Safer Leeds have subsequently remodelled the way that reviews are managed within the team as they recognise this caused a delay and further upset to the family.
- 5.7 There are 8 versions of the initial report on file, so whilst there were no meetings there was ongoing contact between panel members as the report was being redrafted. The latest version from September 2021 was shared with family members and then there was a period of discussion with the family and requests from them for changes to be made. By March 2022, the panel had approved the final version to be submitted to the Home Office. Further comments were received from the family, and these were then included as an appendix. The final version was submitted to the Home Office in October 2022.
- 5.8 Sadly, during 2021 and 2022 there were six further deaths that will be the subjects of Domestic Homicide Reviews in Leeds and so the pressure on services in relation to DHRs remained high. In October 2022, there was a reallocation of work within the team and greater focus given to completing the report and submitting it to the Home Office.
- 5.9 The Author (TB) used a range of approaches to ascertain relevant information for this review. In addition to seeking agency information, she reviewed all police statements and transcripts of interviews, and approached and interviewed relevant witnesses (friends and family) referred to in section 6 of this report. The interviews were variously conducted by phone or Teams, and notes were taken which were then summarised and anonymised for this report.

- 5.10 The perpetrator was not interviewed by the author of this report (TB), although was interviewed by RG. The author spoke with RG about that interview summary content but did not review the notes made by RG.
- 5.11 The review generally followed the Home Office guidance which included panel meetings attended by professionals and the seeking of information to inform the review discussions and report. There were however some challenges around timescales, involvement of the independent domestic violence advisors and most importantly involvement of the family. These have been addressed in this report, and also reviewed internally by senior management within Leeds CSP.
- 5.12 Where relevant and appropriate, a review panel has the authority to request and review Chronologies and/or Individual Management Reviews⁴ (IMRs) from each of the relevant agencies, as defined in Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004).
- 5.13 A DHR panel is also able to invite responses from any other relevant agencies or individuals identified through the process of the review whom they consider may be able to make a meaningful contribution and add value to the review.
- 5.14 The contribution of family members, employers, friends, colleagues, and neighbours should be sought to ensure that a robust analysis is achieved of the full circumstances surrounding the incident under review and the relevant period beforehand.
- 5.15 In this review, these alternative sources of information to inform the review primarily took the form of individual interviews of those who knew Poppy and/or John, either personally or professionally. In some cases, those who contributed to the review knew Poppy or John both as a friend and as a work colleague. They are listed above with relevant pseudonyms.
- 5.16 The Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) in the case also provided her full support and was a source of relevant information that had been gathered during the course of the homicide investigation. She provided the police statements used during the investigation and they informed the decision about who the Chairs/ Authors spoke with.
- 5.17 John was given an opportunity to contribute to the review. He accepted that invitation and was interviewed by the initial Author (RG) at HMP Leeds. He was not re-interviewed by the second Author (TB). He had given false and misleading statements to the police during their investigation. TB took the view, supported by the family, that his lack of truthfulness means that his account would add no credible contribution to this review. John sought to mislead the investigation and showed a lack of compassion and empathy towards Poppy's devastated family.

⁴ Individual Management Reviews (IMRs) are detailed written reports from agencies on their involvement with Poppy and contain analysis of the engagement.

- 5.18 It was decided that the most effective way of compiling an informed and up to date understanding of both Poppy and John was to speak directly with those that knew them both best, including those that had personal experience of them interacting together.
- 5.19 This embraced family, personal friends, work colleagues, managers and those who were at university with one or both of them. Some witnesses fell into more than one of these categories.
- 5.20 Their respective contributions primarily took the form of one-to-one interviews with the initial Independent Author (RG). Many of these interviews were followed up with a second interview with the second Independent Author (TB). Some summary information from police statements was contained in the first review. During the second phase, all police statements were re-examined for clarity of detail and to establish what was known to individuals in the days and hours before the murder.
- 5.21 Due to the fact that a good proportion of the witnesses lived a significant distance away, some even living abroad, the majority of interviews were conducted via video link. The restrictions of the government guidance applied in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic also influenced the form of interview that was conducted, as physical meetings were unable to be undertaken.
- 5.22 The initial interview of Poppy's family, and the father of the perpetrator, were able to be held in person as they preceded the pandemic restrictions. The initial author (RG) made notes of the interviews. They were not audio recorded. Where any subsequent clarification of points was required, the author communicated with the respective witnesses via phone or e-mail. Where direct quotes are attributed to witnesses in the body of the report the quotes are italicised in the text. All witnesses were consenting contributors to the review, and all made themselves available to the initial author to accommodate their respective interviews.
- 5.23 As the second author and Chair (TB) was asked to examine some aspects of the report, some additional information was discovered when discussing the content of some police statements and cross checking the content with the contributors. These additional aspects were reviewed, through interview with selected witnesses via Teams. Handwritten notes were made and checked with the witnesses before addition to the draft report. These comments then allowed for the completion of a timeline.

6. Section 6. Involvement of Family, Friends, Work Colleagues, Wider Community

- 6.1 The support of Poppy's family has been absolute throughout the review process, fully embracing its objectives and engaging with the initial review. They were provided with regular updates as the review progressed by the initial Chair (RG), via video conferencing facilities. Extensive consultation was undertaken with Poppy's family via the Chair; however, they did not agree with all of the initial evidential analysis and conclusions drawn from the review. As a result of this, a subsequent review of the available material was

examined by a second independent Chair and Author (TB), and further witnesses were spoken to, which drew out some additional observations and learning. This led to some amendments and a further draft report being completed. TB has continued to keep the family apprised throughout the revision process.

- 6.2 Poppy's family had the support of a specialist advocate from Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA). This provided much needed support and advice to the family as they navigated through the court, trial and DHR process, allowing them to discuss and challenge the findings of the review.
- 6.3 The family unfortunately were not given the opportunity to meet with the panel during the initial review, and the Home Office leaflets regarding DHR's were not initially given to them by the panel. This is a point of learning and should have happened. This was later corrected, and Poppy's parents were each given a copy of the leaflets. They were offered the opportunity to meet with the CSP team to discuss concerns (including those about the leaflets and meeting the panel) and were offered the opportunity to meet the panel during the revised review process.
- 6.4 Poppy's family presented detailed and intimate details of Poppy, her life, her interests, and her ambitions. As the people who knew her the best and loved her deeply, their insight and commentary enabled the Chair to present a more comprehensive view of their daughter. Family engagement was crucial to understanding Poppy's life.
- 6.5 For ease of reference, and to provide an effective structure to the review, the various groups of witnesses and contributors will be categorised in the following section of the document, and their respective contributions detailed, in turn.

Poppy's Family

- 6.6 Poppy's family, in the form of her parents and her brother, welcomed the author (RG) to their home, and they have wholeheartedly embraced the objectives and process of the review. They provided a comprehensive insight into Poppy's relationship with John, from their unique perspective. This insight was informed by the time that John had spent with Poppy at their home, and also on a number of family holidays.
- 6.7 They talked of Poppy being committed to the relationship, in love with John and apparently initially seeing her future with him, which was evident when she talked to her father in March 2018 about them buying a house together.
- 6.8 It was their collective perception that John often wanted to sustain her attention for himself. Poppy's mother described that when John and Poppy were with her, Poppy and she would be talking about something that he wasn't engaged in. He would often go onto his phone and then tap Poppy to gain her attention and start talking quietly to her, looking at the phone. This behaviour was described as rather possessive. His self-awareness at the impact on others appeared to be missing.

- 6.9 Poppy's brother had a very close relationship with her, and, from the outset he perceived that John somewhat envied the closeness of this sibling relationship, sometimes becoming annoyed at how well they were getting on.
- 6.10 He felt that, on occasion, John showed no awareness of the potential consequences of his actions after he had consumed alcohol, rationalising his view by reference to agitating comments made by John to him after a night out drinking. Despite that perception, Poppy's brother described John as more "cocky" than malicious, describing his perception of him as not being confident in himself in terms of using force.
- 6.11 He described how Poppy told him, at the end of October 2018, that she had split up with John and that he spoke to her a couple of times over the subsequent month. Poppy had told her brother that John was generally dealing with the situation of their breakup well, but sometimes he was passive aggressive, via the use of sly remarks.
- 6.12 Poppy's mother highlighted two entries from Poppy's travel diary that she had come across as she read the document, following Poppy's death. The entries related to two incidents that occurred when Poppy and John were travelling in South America. They took place in Bolivia, in June 2017, and the following month in Brazil. Both events took place in hostel rooms. These are discussed in the analysis section.
- 6.13 In the first incident Poppy records that John had thrown her phone across the room after an argument, and in the second, that he had accidentally hit her in the face. Two 'selfie' type photographs of Poppy's face, taken at the time, were recovered from her phone by her mother (this is discussed at length in the analysis section).
- 6.14 The initial author records that there was a firm belief in the family that, had she felt in any way unsafe in her relationship with John, she would have acted upon that and left their apartment. There was no suggestion that she did feel unsafe at all, nor any that she had done so during their relationship. This does not mean however that she was safe, as we now know from the evidence that John not only had the propensity to violence, but he also had the ability to kill.
- 6.15 In discussion with RG, Poppy's brother was certain that she would have confided in him had John ever physically assaulted her and she had never done so.
- 6.16 Poppy's parents spoke of how Poppy shared with them the fact that she had initially sought to end their relationship in May of 2018, but that John had convinced her not to. They were aware that some months later, having eventually resolved to breakup in October of that year, Poppy decided to stay in their shared apartment until the lease ran out, giving her time to find an alternative apartment within the same complex.
- 6.17 During this period, it was Poppy's perception that, *'he just doesn't get it'*, telling her parents that John was behaving as if they were not breaking up at all. They describe that Poppy felt that it was almost as if he was in denial with regards to the ending of their relationship.

- 6.18 Poppy's mother, however, describes that John did seem resigned to the ending of their relationship when remarks he made to Poppy's mother are considered. During a visit that she made to their apartment on Weekend of 16th – 19th.11.2018, and when referring to him and Poppy breaking up, John said, "*I don't think there's anything I can do*". As a result of her own conversations with her daughter, Poppy's mother concurred with his comment. She considered that John was coming to terms with the split.
- 6.19 Poppy's mother explained that Poppy had told her that John had kept trying to persuade her not to leave. Poppy told her mother that 'she thought he'd got it' after a chat one evening, and on another night, went on to then say that he 'hadn't got it'. Each time Poppy and her mother spoke, Poppy was clear that she wanted the relationship terminated.
- 6.20 Poppy's father also remembers asking Poppy as to whether she was sure that she and John could continue to live together, having ended their relationship. Poppy showed no signs of concern and reassured both of her parents that all was fine.
- 6.21 Poppy told her mother that John had suggested to her that she tell his family of the breakup, at the end of a Halloween party that they were due to attend at his parent's house. However, Poppy refused as she thought that it would be inappropriate to do so as she would be worrying about making the announcement for the whole evening and, also, it could spoil an otherwise happy family gathering.

The Perpetrator's Family

- 6.22 The father of the perpetrator made himself available for interview by the initial Chair/ Author (RG) and provided his full support to the review and its objectives. The second Chair (TB) did not speak with or seek to engage with him, accepting instead the accuracy of the factual 'content' of his submission to the review panel, including examining his written police statement. His personal observations about his son are noted.
- 6.23 He spoke of his own love, and that of his wife and daughters, for Poppy, who had spent two periods of four months living with them at their family home. Those periods respectively followed Poppy's graduation and their return from travelling the Americas.
- 6.24 He described John as being "*really in love with Poppy*" and said he seemed to keep up something of a façade with him and his wife (John's stepmother), about the ending of their relationship.
- 6.25 He disclosed it was early November 2018, before John told him of the breakup, but whilst John did shed some tears, his father felt that his son's reaction was not in any way out of proportion in terms of what might be reasonably expected following the breakup of a long-term relationship.
- 6.26 When asked about how his son had dealt with the loss of his mother, his father explained that this had occurred when John was 18 years old, his parents having split up when he was just three years of age. John had been his mother's primary carer during her

terminal illness and, whilst he was profoundly influenced by the loss of his mother, with whom he had always lived, he did not seem to grieve disproportionately or for a sustained period. His ability to deal effectively with the loss of his mother is, in the view of his father, demonstrated most effectively by John quickly settling into university life and making plenty of new friends there.

- 6.27 John's father felt that alcohol was, what he termed, the critical component in terms of his son's criminal actions. In his police statement, he claimed that such extreme aggression was not at all representative of his own experience of his sons' usual behaviour in drink, describing his son as previously being, in his experience, 'a happy drunk, never aggressive at all'. This paternal comment is not presented to offer mitigation about the ferocious assault on Poppy but is noted here as an observation made by a parent before the tragic incident.
- 6.28 It is not unusual for the family of perpetrators to seek a reason for their behaviour to take away the blame or accountability that a perpetrator should have. The panel do not seek to offer alcohol as an excuse, defence or justification for the violent actions taken by John but note his father's observations of him as a seemingly calm man.

Poppy's friends and work colleagues

- 6.29 This category relates to friends of Poppy from home, in [REDACTED] from University in [REDACTED] and from [REDACTED] where she worked and lived. As noted at the outset, pseudonyms have been used in place of the names of friends and work colleagues. Their observations are dealt with by way of the chronology (section 13). Their relationship to Poppy is as follows:
- 6.30 **Liz:** Liz spent three years with Poppy at university and spoke of meeting John for the first time on the occasion of their graduation in July 2015. She spoke of really liking John, and as time went on and his relationship with Poppy developed, she considered him to be a friend. She spoke of visiting Poppy and John in Leeds twice in 2018, once in January for their flat warming and then in August. On both occasions she felt that Poppy and John were getting on really well. Liz had no inkling at all of an impending breakup, so it was something of a surprise to her when, in mid-November 2018, she received a text from Poppy in which she revealed that her and John were breaking up.
- 6.31 Liz described Poppy as very logical and she was certain that, had she felt in danger in any way, she would have left and moved out of their apartment. Poppy did not seem to Liz to be upset about the breakup which Liz described as Poppy's usual way of dealing with things, as she was rational and factual.
- 6.32 **Kath:** Kath is a university friend, who lived with Poppy for two years during their time together [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. She left the year that Poppy stayed on to complete her master's degree but as her boyfriend at the time was also still at the university, so she used to share a lift with [REDACTED] to visit Poppy. She found John to be "nice enough" but noted that he was not particularly affectionate towards Poppy, and she spoke of witnessing him being, what she described as, "overly

aggressive” during a house party at a friend’s house in 2017 (detailed in the chronology). Aggression was not something she had witnessed before; Kath did find him to be, in her observations, *“passively controlling”* with Poppy. She gave examples of how he would give Poppy, what she described as a ‘cold shoulder’, if Poppy did not totally agree with what he wanted to do. This is a controlling behaviour.

However, Kath spoke positively of how John would also be very accommodating, such as the occasions when he would cook dinner whilst she and Poppy had a gossip at their apartment.

Kath never saw, or perceived, anything about John that caused her any concern with regard to him ever causing harm to Poppy.

6.33 **Hannah:** Hannah was the girlfriend of one of Poppy’s work colleagues and lived in the same apartment complex. Whilst not a particularly close friend of Poppy, she socialised with her and John regularly, most notably at the pub quiz that was held at a local pub each Sunday evening. She described Poppy and John as *“a great couple, both fun loving and great to be with”* and described how in her opinion there was *“no big emotional issue”* when they broke up. When she heard of John punching one of Poppy’s colleagues, she was very surprised and she remembers questioning, in her words, *“whether he had it in him to hit anyone.”* She did not consider John to be aggressive in any way, despite the evidence of that assault.

6.34 **Chloe:** Chloe is a childhood friend of Poppy’s, and they would often get together during the holidays. She had met John on four or five occasions and considered him to be a quieter person than she thought that Poppy would choose in a boyfriend. She stated that John, *“never presented, in conversation, as anything other than normal or straightforward”* and she never saw him as representing any kind of danger to Poppy. Chloe added that she had never witnessed John’s behaviour to change in drink.

Poppy’s Work Colleagues

6.35 A significant proportion of the people that fall within this category of the review were also personal friends of Poppy, such were the relationships within the team since she had joined the company in October 2017.

6.36 Indeed, the closeness of the Research and Development team, within which Poppy worked, is worthy of specific reference within this review. It is clear that her loss has caused profound upset and grief amongst them. As they shared their experience of working and socialising with Poppy it was clear that she was a hugely popular and a respected member of their team.

6.37 **Doug:** Doug was Poppy’s manager and was involved in her initial recruitment to the company and went on to work closely with her on a daily basis. Subsequently, he was very well placed to assess her professional capabilities and he described her as, *“genuinely exceptional and completely outstanding”*. He detailed how she had been formally graded by him and his own line manager as *‘Remarkable’* in her latest

performance assessment, explaining that such a grading was only achieved by the top 5% of staff within the company. This was particularly notable as she had only joined the company a year before that assessment, in October 2017.

- 6.38 Despite the standard of her professional performance, Doug described Poppy as, *"incredibly humble, always focusing on learning and improving."* From a personal perspective, he explained that *"smiling was her trademark"* and that she was the driving force behind what they called the 'R&D Olympics' and, also, several members of the team entering the Leeds half marathon. He described Poppy as a competitive person, with a particular ability to play table football, always energetically encouraging others to participate.
- 6.39 It was within this context, of being close to her colleagues, that Doug believed that had Poppy had any concerns about her personal relationship with John that she would have shared them with one or more of the team.
- 6.40 He gave an example of the altruistic culture that existed within the team when Poppy had confided in him about her concerns with regard to how a colleague was coping, emotionally, with an impending difficult anniversary. As a result, steps had been taken to support the colleague and assuage his worries and concerns.
- 6.41 Doug first met John in May 2018 when he and his girlfriend were invited by Poppy to watch football, along with 20-30 other friends and colleagues, at the apartment that Poppy shared with John. He got on well with John whom he described as, *"a genuinely nice guy"* and, from then on, whenever a group outing was arranged, the invitation was extended to include him, also. Subsequently, John became familiar to a number of Poppy's work colleagues.
- 6.42 Doug had no idea that their relationship was to end until Poppy requested time off to view a flat, which she matter-of-factly referred to as just being for her, and not for her and John together. Realising that it could be an emotional period, Doug reassured Poppy that she could have time off, should she need it, in the forthcoming weeks, but she never made any such request, just remaining in his opinion, her normal self.
- 6.43 Having realised that Poppy and John were to separate, Doug explained that he was then surprised to see John accompany Poppy to the Sunday evening quiz, which took place in late November or early December. Despite the fact that their relationship was over, Doug described both John and Poppy as appearing *"fine and normal"* together, with no apparent signs of tension between them.
- 6.44 **Bob:** Other colleagues spoke of being aware that Poppy had broken up with John and that she was planning to move to another apartment. Bob spoke of Poppy showing him photos of the apartment to which she was moving, and them discussing the buying of furniture at Ikea over lunch. He also spoke of Poppy telling him that she had, together with John, visited his family in early December 2018, as a means of saying goodbye to them. This gesture had also been referred to by Doug, who described it as, *"almost a courtesy of breaking up with them. A testament of the kind of person that she was."*

- 6.45 **Gary:** Another colleague of Poppy's, Gary, lived in the same apartment block with his girlfriend so he knew both Poppy and John relatively well. He described their relationship in his opinion, as "*pretty normal*", with the qualification that John was, in his words, chasing Poppy, "*He was keener, she was a bit cooler.*" Gary had been out with both Poppy and John on numerous occasions, including parties at their respective apartments.
- 6.46 Poppy had told Gary of their separation, towards the end of November 2018, but she had seemed in his view, to be her normal self. She had explained to him that, until her new apartment became available, she would continue to stay at the shared apartment with John, whilst also staying some nights with friends. There had been nothing out of the ordinary in terms of what Poppy had said, or her demeanour.
- 6.47 Gary had seen John when he was drunk, describing him as, "*A very talkative drunk, slurring, never anything other than a nice guy and a happy drunk.*" He spoke of bumping into John at lunchtime on 11.12.2018 (account in the chronology). It was clear to Gary that John was upset and emotional, especially as he revealed that he was finding the situation of the split with Poppy to be tough and that he was struggling with it.
- 6.48 **Harry:** The senior manager, who managed the person who was responsible for the team in which Poppy worked, was also interviewed. This was a means of securing a perspective on Poppy that was removed from her immediate working colleagues. Despite being detached from Poppy on a day to day working basis, his assessment of her was entirely consistent with that provided by the people who worked with her more closely.
- 6.49 As was the case with Poppy's immediate line manager, Harry referred to her charisma, her consistent propensity to smile, and of identifying her qualities during her initial recruitment process, in which he'd been involved. Harry also confirmed Poppy's indicative performance rating of 'remarkable' and spoke of her ability to bring people together and her consistent willingness to volunteer for charitable initiatives. He had never met John, nor had he spoken to Poppy about him.

Poppy's New Partner – Tony

- 6.50 Following her breakup from John, Poppy entered into a relationship with a work colleague with whom she had worked since joining the organisation just over a year previously. He will be referred to as Tony. Tony had admired Poppy but recognising she was in a relationship, so had never approached her romantically. On discovering she had split up with John, they became romantically involved.
- 6.51 There is a violent incident where, John attacks Tony, described within the chronology. The following weekend after the assault, John attempts to apologise, explaining that he hadn't realised that 'he and Poppy were definitely over' when he had seen them kissing the previous week. That claim by John must be considered within the context of the remark that he made to Poppy's mother, some two weeks earlier (09.11.2018), in which

he had seemingly acknowledged that there was nothing he could do to prevent their breakup.

- 6.52 It was following that interaction with John that Tony felt that it was a real watershed, in that John had accepted that his relationship with Poppy was over. Tony says, it was following that apology and explanation by John that Tony felt that *“It was okay for my relationship with Poppy to blossom.”*
- 6.53 However, cognisant of the potential awkwardness of the situation, whereby she had started a new relationship whilst still living with her former boyfriend, Tony did offer to Poppy the option of staying over at his apartment. He explained to Poppy that he had held a torch for her for the previous six months and, that having waited for so long because she was already in a relationship, he was content with waiting a couple of weeks more before taking their relationship further.
- 6.54 Tony explained that he *“didn’t want to jump in too quick with her”* and, to that end, he repeatedly sought to convince Poppy that his priority was to ensure that she was okay. However, after saying it three or four times, Poppy became slightly frustrated with him and stopped him from saying it again.
- 6.55 Poppy explained to Tony that they were both trying to be amicable about their breakup, but that on occasion, John could be something of, what she described as, a *“Jekyll and Hyde character.”* She explained this phrase as being the fact that John would be seemingly accepting of their split but would then seek to convince her not to break up with him. There was, apparently, an inconsistency in his attitude.
- 6.56 On one occasion, Poppy told him that John had returned to their apartment in the middle of his shift one evening, **and** to his surprise found Poppy not to be there. She explained that John was ‘hurt’ when she subsequently told him that she was not at home as she was out with Tony.
- 6.57 Despite his violence towards Tony, at no stage did Poppy suggest to Tony that John was in any way violent or threatening towards Poppy personally, and Tony never got the impression at all that she was, in any way, fearful of John.

John’s Work Colleagues

- 6.58 A number of John’s work colleagues would also describe themselves as his friend as he was a sociable and popular member of his team. As a gifted mathematician, John worked in the betting industry, as did Poppy, but for a rival organisation.
- 6.59 John was described by one of his managers, as *“a star performer and incredibly bright. He was so polite and had excellent manners.”* This assessment was endorsed by his initial line manager, when John first joined the organisation, and before he left to go travelling with Poppy.
- 6.60 Another Senior manager, who had worked in both of the organisations in which Poppy and John worked and knew them both and their professional roles, claimed in his view

Poppy was in a more skilled role, in which she used her mathematical abilities more and that John was, *“always somewhat in Poppy’s shadow.”*

- 6.61 **Terry:** In terms of personal friendships, John was closest to one of his work colleagues who will be referred to as Terry. Terry described how, in May 2018, John told him that Poppy had declared that she was no longer feeling the same way about their relationship. However, he had managed to convince her not to break up and to sustain their relationship.
- 6.62 John felt that any problems in their relationship had been worked through in the subsequent months and then consolidated following a number of holidays that he and Poppy went on together in September of 2018. However, this turned out not to be the case and it was only a few weeks later that John disclosed to Terry again, that Poppy wanted to end their relationship. Terry described how, at that time, he was going through a similar situation and how they both spoke about the breakup of their respective relationships.
- 6.63 He told of how John seemed to have accepted that he and Poppy were coming to an end, but that he had expressed frustration to him that Poppy would not, he claimed, engage with him when he tried to discuss the issue with her. Despite that frustration, it was Terry’s perception that, although John was upset and still loved Poppy, he had come to terms with their breakup, and he referred to how they had discussed the issue the week before when they had both gone out to watch football together and *“all seemed normal”*.
- 6.64 He referred to Poppy as being bubbly, chatty, and engaging. He also said that John had told him that he had met a girl in the weeks after his split with Poppy, and on one occasion she had stayed over at the apartment when Poppy was away visiting friends.
- 6.65 He stated that John was aware that Poppy had started a relationship with a work colleague. Terry recalled John having mentioned that Poppy had stayed over with her new boyfriend, although he had made no specific comment about his thoughts on that matter. Terry was at their works Christmas party with John and other colleagues. He recalls John, whom he described as drunk but not overly so, telling him that Poppy had stayed out the night before, after her own works party.
- 6.66 As they had talked at the party, John claimed to Terry that he and Poppy ‘had kissed’ before she left for her party and that when she then stayed out with her new boyfriend that night that he had felt both confused and frustrated. There is no context to the description of this kiss (a kiss on the cheek is very different from a more intimate kiss), however it is his perception that John read something romantic into it. John also told Terry that he was not aware that Poppy had intended to stay out that night.
- 6.67 A further colleague was also at the party and explained that John had spoken to a number of his colleagues during the evening with regard to his breakup with Poppy and shared with them how disappointed he was that it had reached that stage.

The Perpetrator- John

- 6.68 John was interviewed, over the course of three police interviews. In his second interview, he acknowledges to police that he had looked at Poppy's phone and he states that this was after she had been fatally injured. He stated he saw a message from Tony, which he was unhappy with. There is no evidence that John did view the phone before the fatal attack on Poppy. At the time of the investigation, the police knew the date and the time that the WhatsApp thread between Poppy began and ended. They also knew the date and time that the last message had been read by Poppy because she replied to it.
- 6.69 Data was not available at that time however, to show whether her mobile phone was accessed after the time that her last message was sent, or whether the WhatsApp thread had been viewed subsequent to the time that the message was first read. The only account the police had was that agreed by John.
- 6.70 Poppy's family take a firm view that Poppy would have woken if he had tried to take her phone and would have stopped him from doing so. The police analysis of Poppy's phone showed that she had been texting and receiving 'jokey' messages from Tony over several hours that evening, making plans for the following week, the last being at 22.07hrs, when she indicated, she was going to bed.
- 6.71 It has been stated that John accessed Poppy's phone and read messages sent between Poppy and Tony at 07.30. This was not evidenced by any data currently in police possession, and so cannot be stated as fact, even though it was admitted by John. West Yorkshire Police Digital Forensic Unit did not have the technology in 2018 to download that data. However, Poppy's phone was accessed at 07.34⁵, as one of Poppy's friends later discovered that the message she had sent to Poppy had been read at that time, and showed on her device as a 'read message'.
- 6.72 John was interviewed at HMP Leeds, on 15.11.2019. He was accompanied by his Probation Officer. Whilst he fully engaged with the author, and understood the objectives of the review, his portrayal of events or conversations, whilst he was alone with Poppy, cannot be corroborated or verified. The conversation included an acknowledgement from him that the accounts that he had provided to West Yorkshire Police were dishonest. For that reason, his detailed account is not described, but his acknowledgement of key issues is.
- 6.73 In this meeting, he acknowledged that he had taken a knife into Poppy's bedroom. One of his comments provides an insight into his mindset at the time of his attack on Poppy. He said, '*Nothing I could say to her could hurt her, so I have taken out my revenge physically.*'

⁵ This timed WhatsApp message entry was viewed by Poppy's mother.

7. Section 7. Contributors to review/ Agencies submitting IMR's:

7.1 The DHR Subgroup is accountable to the Chair of the Safer Leeds Executive. The Chair of the DHR Subgroup is the Head of Safeguarding and Strategic Partnerships (LCC Safer and Stronger Communities). Individuals with sufficient seniority are drawn from the following organisations:

- Leeds Domestic Violence Service
- Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Unit
- Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board Business Unit
- LCC Children's Social Work Service
- LCC Early Start and Targeted Services
- LCC Education Safeguarding
- LCC Adult Social Care
- Leeds Health and Care Partnership, NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
- LCC Adults and Health Commissioning
- Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust
- Leeds and York Partnership Foundation Trust
- Leeds Community Health Care
- Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service - Yorkshire & the Humber
- West Yorkshire Police
- LCC Housing

7.2 It was standard practice in Leeds to carry out a scoping exercise in order to understand the scale of the review and to confirm that the criteria had been met. It further helped to secure partner involvement in the review process. Safer Leeds have reviewed this approach and now changed their practice so that the decision is made as soon as possible where there are clear circumstances for a review to take place. The Scoping exercise was carried out to establish what, if anything, was known by agencies who may have been in contact with Poppy or John, and to inform the membership of the DHR panel.

Positive scoping responses (3) received from:

- Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). This is now part of the NHS West Yorkshire Integrated care Board.
- LCC Customer Access*
- Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS)*

Agencies marked * provided information though little or no contact prior to the fatal incident.

7.3 From the scoping exercise carried out, the CSP established that Poppy had no known involvement with organisations that support victims of Domestic Abuse in Leeds. That does not mean that she had not sought help or advice in different areas, rather that Leeds CSP had not been provided with any relevant information at the time of the initial review. It is also unknown to what extent, if any, that she may have personally researched information connected to abuse.

- 7.4 Negative scoping responses were received from all other statutory agencies in Leeds meaning that they had no information on Poppy or John.
- 7.5 The HO Guidelines make it clear that an IMR should include a comprehensive chronology that charts the involvement of the agency with the victim and perpetrator over the period of time set out in the 'Terms of Reference' for the review. It should summarise: the events that occurred; intelligence and information known to the agency; the decisions reached; the services offered and provided to the subjects of the review; and any other action taken.
- 7.6 Each IMR author should have no previous knowledge of the subjects of the review nor had any involvement in the provision of services to them. They are selected as people independent from any clinical or line management supervision for any of the practitioners who provided care for them and could provide an analysis of events that occurred; the decisions made; and the actions taken or not taken.
- 7.7 Where judgements are made or actions taken that indicate that practice or management could be improved, the review should consider not only what happened, but why. Each agency should provide a chronology of interaction with the subjects of the review, including what decisions were made and what actions were taken, prior to completing the IMR.
- 7.8 IMR should consider the TOR and whether internal procedures had been followed and whether, on reflection, they had been adequate. IMR authors are asked to arrive at a conclusion on their own agency's involvement and to make recommendations where appropriate.
- 7.9 They should be quality assured by the author and panel Chair and the respective agency. During this review, all of the agencies that had any contact with Poppy or John were identified and asked to provide chronologies of that involvement within the time parameters identified for the review.
- 7.10 Following a review of those chronologies it became apparent that IMR's from the respective agencies were not required, other than from the CCG which submitted a report on behalf of the relevant GP practices.
- 7.11 IMR Authors have to confirm they are independent of line management in the case, and this is usually a statement on the IMR itself. Safer Leeds received emails from agencies nominating staff and confirming they are independent or disclosing where there may be an issue so that the chair can take a view if that's appropriate and may refer to that in the report. In this review, as only one service had contact with Poppy (GP) and their IMR was done by the CCG (who are a separate organisation), independence was confirmed.
- 7.12 The chronology (and later IMR) provided by the GP practice revealed that neither Poppy nor John were frequent visitors and, when they did attend, such as when they had vaccinations prior to their joint travel to the Americas, no safeguarding risks were ever identified. Since 2015, domestic abuse routine enquiry in primary care has been successfully piloted in Leeds. Routine enquiry involves primary care practitioners asking every unaccompanied female

over the age of 16 directly and confidently about domestic violence and abuse. This requires confidence, skill and appropriate training. As neither practice involved in this review were either part of the pilot or had accessed appropriate training, practitioners at both practices were not routinely asking about domestic violence and abuse during the specified timeframe. Practitioners would have been more likely to use triggered enquiry which would occur when there is a rationale to ask about domestic abuse. As there was no evidence to suggest that Poppy was either a historical or current victim of abuse, triggered enquiry was not used. Since this review commenced the two practices involved have completed routine enquiry training and are implementing the same.

- 7.13 It was established that there had been no contact with West Yorkshire Police at all.
- 7.14 Outside of the scoping, enquiries were made with the Leeds Domestic Violence Service (LDVS). No information was known to them, and they had no service involvement with Poppy or John. As a result, they were not requested to attend the first panel meetings, nor do a chronology or IMR.
- 7.15 LDVS are always available to clarify information that they have sent (if any exists) and are happy for their expertise and opinion to be sought on various issues that may be raised during a review. They did not sit on the initial panel. This is a point of learning and as this review moved to phase 2, a representative from LDVS was asked to attend when the report was revisited and, to be part of the panel providing expert advice.
- 7.16 The Chair (TB) had an individual discussion with the Chief Executive of Leeds Women’s Aid (the contract lead for the LDVS partnership) and agreed some points of learning. Safer Leeds and LDVS feel that DHRs’ are always better when LDVS are involved but recognise that being on all the review panels is a big resource commitment for a non-statutory agency. LDVS have therefore agreed to be invited to read the draft reports of those reviews where there was no LDVS involvement with the victim, to ensure that there’s a specialist review of the report without placing too great a demand on their limited teams.

8. Section 8. The Review panel members

DHR Panel Members: First Panel

Name	Organisation
[REDACTED]	Independent Chair and Author
[REDACTED]	Safer Leeds Safeguarding & DV Team
[REDACTED]	NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) . This is now the INHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
[REDACTED]	National Probation Service
[REDACTED]	Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board

██████████	West Yorkshire Police- Leeds District Safeguarding departmental lead
██████████	Safer Leeds Safeguarding & DV Team
██████████	Service Delivery Manager – Mental Health Services & DOLS

The DHR Panel Members **Second Panel**

Name	Organisation
██████████	Independent Chair and Author
██████████	NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
██████████	Probation Service
██████████	Service Delivery Manager – Mental Health Services & DOLS
██████████	West Yorkshire Police – Safeguarding Central Governance Unit (DA & Adult lead)
██████████	Leeds Women’s Aid (LDVS)
██████████	<i>Safer Leeds CSP Coordinating Role (not panel member)</i>
██████████	<i>Safer Leeds CSP Coordinating Role (not panel member)</i>

8.1 *A specialist in domestic violence & abuse whom the Panel members are satisfied meets the requirements outlined in Section 4 (paragraph 29) of the Home Office Statutory Guidance, 2016. There was limited information known to the professional agencies (of either Poppy or John) involved in this review. The paucity of relevant ‘professional’ information is not unusual in domestic homicide cases, particularly where victims have not made disclosures. It is also recognised that some victims do not see themselves as victims. In this case, Poppy made no formal disclosure to any agency involved in this review. That does not mean that she did not research abuse or coercive or controlling behaviour or contact any other ‘out of area’ agency. It is important to note that the panel just not have any evidence one way or the other.

9. Section 9 - Author and Independent Chair of the Overview Report

9.1 Paragraphs 36 to 39 of the Home Office Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews December 2016 sets out the requirements for review Chairs and Authors. In this case, the Chair and Author was two people.

- 9.2 The initial Chair and Author is RG a former Detective Superintendent with extensive experience of investigating and reviewing homicides and other serious and organised criminality. He has participated in serious case reviews, and he was a member of the Association of Chief Police Officers Homicide Working Group, which identified and disseminated best practice regarding the investigation of homicide offences. He retired from North Yorkshire police in January 2013. Now working independently, he directed the NHS related investigations into the activities of Jimmy Savile in Leeds, and then directed the NHS Savile Legacy Unit, which quality assured the investigations into Savile's activities at NHS Trusts across the country.
- 9.3 He has chaired and authored DHR's in both England and Wales, and he has contributed extensively to Mental Health Homicide Reviews around the UK. He has undertaken independent investigations and reviews for the Church of England, as well as a number of registered charities and commercial organisations. He has no association with the agencies involved in the review.
- 9.4 TB was selected as the subsequent Chair of the Review Panel and Author of the report. She retired from British Policing (not Leeds) in November 2018, after 30 years. As a former senior police officer, she worked across a range of policing disciplines, including Serious Organised Crime, Counter Terrorism and Safeguarding in management positions. She gained experience of reviews working extensively in partnership with other agencies and had experience of working with many different communities. She was a trained Senior Investigating Officer (SIO).
- 9.5 She worked across a number of Public Protection and Safeguarding portfolios in London and Surrey, managing and overseeing MAPPA⁶ and MARAC⁷ processes. As the police Public Protection lead in Westminster, she managed and oversaw Domestic Abuse services, to diverse communities. As a Borough Commander in a West London Borough, she was the core police member of the Safer and Stronger Strategy Group. Operating as 'Gold London'⁸, TB had overall strategic command of multiple incidents including those involving domestic abuse and homicide.
- 9.6 Working in partnership, TB additionally led the national police implementation of the cross-agency Operational Improvement Review (OIR) recommendations following the terrorist activities across the UK in 2017/18.

⁶ MAPPA stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, and it is the process through which various agencies such as the police, the Prison Service and Probation work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community.

⁷ MARAC is a multi-agency meeting which facilitates the risk assessment process for individuals and their families who are at risk of domestic violence and abuse. Organisations are invited to share information with a view to identifying those at "very high" risk of domestic violence and abuse. Where very high risk has been identified, a multi-agency action plan is developed to support all those at risk.

⁸ The generic command structure, nationally recognised, accepted and used by the police, other emergency services and partner agencies, is based on the gold, silver, bronze (GSB) hierarchy of command and can be applied to the resolution of both spontaneous incidents and planned operations.

9.7 TB has not worked for any agency in Leeds and has no connection with any of the agencies involved in this review. TB is therefore independent for this review. She has completed the relevant Home Officer DHR Chair training.

9.8 TB has been the Chair and Author for 10 DHR's and is a current Chair and Author for the new OWHR⁹ pilot process. She is a trainer for Sancus Solutions, delivering safeguarding and equality training, and delivered the OWHR training to over 80 delegates, including safeguarding and, equality and diversity input.

10. Parallel Reviews

10.1 There was one parallel review, which was the Inquest process. On 16th January 2019, an Inquest was opened at Wakefield Coroner's Court into Poppy's death. Due to the fact that criminal proceedings were in progress, following the arrest and charge of a suspect, the Coroner adjourned the request to a later date.

10.2 On 12th April 2019, John pleaded guilty to Poppy's murder at Leeds Crown Court and was sentenced to life imprisonment and told that he must serve a minimum of 16 years and two months. As a result of that conviction the Coroner's Inquest did not need to be reconvened.

11. Equality and Diversity

11.1 The Chair and the Review Panel considered the nine Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation) during the DHR process in evaluating the various services provided and have been regularly revisited throughout the Review. The below is a synopsis for each category:

11.2 Age: Poppy was a 24-year-old woman at the time of her murder. Her ex-partner John was over 1 year older (25) at the time of her tragic murder. Age is significant when looking at victims of this crime. An estimated 28.4% of women aged 16 to 59 years have experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years (Office of National Statistics, 2019).

11.3 Disability: The Equality Act 2010 defines **disability** as: "A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities."

11.4 There is no information to suggest Poppy fell into this definition relating to physical disability or mental disability. There are no records to suggest Poppy suffered from any learning and communication difficulties. In fact, the opposite was true. She was described as exceptionally smart, was able to read aged 4 and also attained exceptionally high academic achievement.

11.5 John had also no identified disability issues.

⁹ OWHR is Offensive Weapons Homicide Review is a HO pilot to deal with the under researched and reviewed area of homicides involving offensive weapons in 4 pilot sites across the UK.

- 11.6 Gender reassignment: Not Applicable to this Review.
- 11.7 Marriage and civil partnership: Poppy had never been married. She had several short relationships as a teenager, but John was her first formal and long-term partner. After completing university, Poppy moved into John's shared accommodation in Leeds for several months, before living with his parents (father and stepmother) for 3 months in Leeds before they commenced travelling.
- 11.8 They moved into a rented flat and cohabited but there was no formal civil partnership. This was the first place they lived together without the presence of other flat mates or his family. There had been discussion about the possibility of them buying a place together in March 2018, but Poppy informed her parents that she had decided not to go through with that (sometime in May 2018). This is evidence of her doubts about the relationship. They had been living together for less than 6 months when she decided that she wanted to separate, although after some persuasion, they remained as a couple for a further 4-5 months.
- 11.9 Pregnancy and maternity: Poppy had no children. As a result, she would **not** have been subject to routine review by medical professionals.
- 11.10 Race: Both Poppy and John were of White British Heritage. There are no known issues relating to race in this review.
- 11.11 Religion or belief: The couples' religious beliefs are unknown and are not believed to have had a bearing on the events being reviewed.
- 11.12 Sex: Sex always requires special consideration. Poppy was female, and John is male. Records show that the majority of victims of domestic homicide were female (74%) and that 80% of that number were killed by a partner or ex-partner. Extensive analytical studies of domestic homicide in reviews reveal gendered victimisation across both intimate partner and familial homicides. Males represent the majority of perpetrators. Females represent the majority of victims.
- 11.13 Sexual orientation: The sexual orientation for both Poppy and John are believed to have been heterosexual. This does not appear to have had relevance in this review.
- 11.14 Intersectionality was discussed at length during the panel. In simple terms, intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on any of the protected characteristics, and/or class and other forms of discrimination "intersect" to create unique dynamics and effects.
- 11.15 In this case, Poppy came from a family that would be described as 'traditional' (two supportive parents and a brother), had lived most of her life in a privately owned home, had been educated in a state school achieving exceptional grades, and was a gifted sportswoman. There were no unique characteristics which would suggest she would be more likely to be victimized. Intersectionality does not appear to have been a feature in this case.

Other factors discussed of Note.

11.16 Unconscious Bias: The Panel have discussed whether there is evidence of differential service or conscious / unconscious biases from any public body for anyone subject of this report. There is nothing obvious, but stereotypical assumptions can never be ruled out completely. Any intersectionality of the applicable protected characteristics will be explored in the context of the report.

11.17 Victim blaming: Victim blaming, in recent years, has been increasingly researched and is now understood in a much wider context within society and professional organisations. Victim blaming can be identified as the following:

- Blaming the victim occurs when people hold the victim responsible for his or her suffering. When people blame the victim, they attribute the cause of the victim's suffering to the behaviours or characteristics of the victim, instead of attributing the cause to a perpetrator or situational factors.
- Ironically, victim blame often stems from a desire to see the world as a just and fair place where people get what they deserve. This belief in a just world lets people confront the world as though it were stable and orderly.
- By derogating victims and blaming them for their negative outcomes, people can maintain the belief that the world is a fair place after all.

11.18 In this review, care was taken to ensure that victim blaming did not become a feature, and the panel were alert to this as a potential issue when discussing witness accounts. Many of the witness accounts referred to their deep surprise and shock at the murder. In their statements to police and the review Chair, witnesses interviewed believed that at the time, John did not represent a threat to Poppy, so were devastated by what occurred.

11.19 The witnesses were clear that Poppy was 'matter of fact' about the breakdown of the relationship, but that she was also being kind and supportive to John as they separated. Witnesses variously describe John as 'upset', and somewhat frustrated as he wanted the relationship to continue. He referred to Poppy's 'lack of respect for him', to several people. Their accounts are contained in the witness section of this report.

12. Section 12- Dissemination

- Leeds Community Safety Partnership.
- All agencies contributing to the review.
- Leeds combined Authority Mayor with dedicated Deputy Mayor for Policing
- Domestic Abuse Commissioner.
- It is a requirement that the Overview report shall belong in the public domain.

13. Section 13 - Background, Overview and Chronology (The Facts)

13.1 This following part of the report combines elements of the background, overview and chronology sections of the Home Office DHR Guidance overview report template. This was done to avoid duplication of information. The narrative is told chronologically to give background history of Poppy prior to and including the timescales under review stated in the

terms of reference to give context to their story. It is built on the lives of Poppy, John, and the reported relationships she had been in. It is punctuated by subheadings to aid understanding.

Background Information

13.2 This review relates to Poppy's murder that took place in the apartment that Poppy shared with her former boyfriend John, in the city centre of Leeds, West Yorkshire, shortly before Christmas 2018. Poppy had lived in the apartment, with her then partner, for just over a year. Part of the time that they lived there was as 'ex-partners'.

The Victim

13.3 Poppy's family give their description of their beloved daughter and sister as follows: Poppy was from a white British family and was born in 1996 [REDACTED]. She originated from the south of England. She had one sibling, a brother who is referred to in this report and she attended a local school. She had excelled at school, achieving at almost everything she engaged with. She was a talented sportswoman, playing tennis at a high level.

13.4 Poppy had lived with her parents until 2012 when she left home to attend [REDACTED] University, returning to her hometown during holiday periods. Poppy was academically gifted. She obtained a degree in 2015 in maths and a Master's degree in 2016 in statistics.

13.5 Poppy was just 24 years of age when her life was taken away as a result of being murdered by her ex-partner John, who was still resident in their shared flat.

13.6 It is impossible in a few short paragraphs to adequately describe Poppy, her life, her achievements, or her impact on people. As a means of helping those reading this review to achieve an understanding of the person that she was, Poppy's mother, father and brother created the following pen picture of their daughter and sister.

13.7 Poppy was an extremely bright young woman, both in intellect and in her outlook on life. Her appetite for learning was apparent when she was a toddler. By the time she was four years old, she was reading her first paperback. It was numbers that really appealed to her. She would ask for 'sums' to do and was great at jigsaws.

13.8 She was a star at school, where she was voted 'Most likely person in the year group to change the world'. Poppy was moved up a year so that her academic gifts could be satisfied. She taught herself Further Maths A-level in eight months at the kitchen table, achieving an A* in the exam. But she did not just shine academically at school: she was given the Sports Personality of the Year award two years running and won a Design Technology prize.

13.9 As a teenager, Poppy helped with children's tennis coaching and completed a qualification in it. The little ones loved her and always gathered around her, wanting her to help them. She loved being with them too. She never missed a Saturday: come rain, shine, fog or ice, Poppy always turned up.

She was also great on 'Sing star karaoke'.

- 13.10 Poppy became a highly talented mathematician and statistician as she moved on to university, achieving a First-Class degree and then a Distinction in her Masters, all the while being the master of ceremonies on the social side for her wide group of friends. She took on a variety of jobs both before and during university, which involved commitment. Poppy always gave 100% commitment.
- 13.11 Poppy loved life and lived it to the full, which had an infectious effect on the people around her. She was adventurous and loved to travel, embracing every opportunity and new experience that came her way. Poppy's love of travel was something she had plans to continue to pursue. She had visited 34 countries before she was murdered, and she would have explored so much more of the world.
- 13.12 Poppy was open and outgoing, caring, and inclusive, happy to help other people and also capable of inspiring and galvanising them whether, to go for a night out, or perhaps to join in on a charitable activity. She was a fun person to be with.
- 13.13 Poppy worked hard and conscientiously and was excelling in her career. Her job in Leeds involved a really active social life and she loved having fun with mates more than anything. As a friend from work pointed out, she was always last to leave the night out and the first one at her desk the next morning. Poppy was motivational at work, encouraging others in a variety of ways from 'secret Santa' activities to community work such as painting fences in the park.
- 13.14 She moved easily into the predominantly male-dominated world. Her line manager described her as, "*genuinely exceptional and completely outstanding*".
- 13.15 Poppy was described as exceptional by her work colleagues. Her aptitude and performance in her role were remarkable.

The Perpetrator

- 13.16 John was from a white British family and was born in 1993. He originated from the north of England. His parents separated when he was a child and he resided with his mother. His father had remarried, and he had two half siblings. After his mother's death, he went to live with his father and his new wife.
- 13.17 John attended a local school before going to university at [REDACTED]. He obtained a mathematics degree and later a Master's degree.
- 13.18 Poppy's diary had multiple references to them both drinking and 'getting drunk' whilst they travelled. This is not considered to be an unusual factor, as young people travelling and enjoying the social element of new countries, people, food, and drinks as they socialised frequently where alcohol was a feature.
- 13.19 There is no police information or intelligence about John. He did not have a criminal record and had not come to the attention of police before the incident.

Domestic History: What was known about Poppy and John together.

- 13.20 Poppy met John in a nightclub in [REDACTED], where they had both studied mathematics at the University [REDACTED]. John was one academic year ahead of Poppy and the day that they met was actually his last day at university.
- 13.21 John returned to his hometown of Leeds after leaving university, but he and Poppy commenced a distance-relationship, travelling to stay at each other's accommodation during the year that she remained [REDACTED]. Poppy joined John in Leeds after graduating, living with him initially in his shared accommodation before moving in with his family to save some money for proposed travels. The travels were known to be 'Poppy's dream', but John went along with it.
- 13.22 After both initially finding work and saving money, in February 2017, they began a travelling adventure that took them through North and South America, for a total of 7 months. During this time, Poppy kept a daily travel diary, noting places visited, records of their encounters with other travellers and the day-to-day records of their meals, drinks, and socialising. There are two entries in an otherwise unremarkable diary which will be examined later in this report.
- 13.23 When they returned to the UK in September 2017, they both, once again, found work in Leeds city centre, albeit at different locations. Poppy had originally started to look for work in London, but John wanted to stay in Leeds, so that is where she focussed her job search.
- 13.24 Poppy worked as a Quantitative Trading Analyst, in a role linked to sports betting. She excelled in her role and was described as having an almost unique interest in mathematics, statistics, and sport.
- 13.25 John worked at a rival organisation, also in a sports betting role, as a Sports Trader. He was also described as a high performer in his role.
- 13.26 They initially stayed with John's dad and stepmother but secured the tenancy on a flat in November 2017, moving in together. They had been living together for a period of months and Poppy had initially disclosed to her parents in March 2018 that they were considering buying a place together (at John's suggestion). It is unclear why she decided not to proceed, but by May 2018, Poppy decided that she wanted to terminate the relationship and split up. She also revealed to her parents that she no longer planned to buy a place with him.
- 13.27 Poppy decided that she did not want to continue the relationship and told John this. Poppy also shared this information with a number of friends, some of whom have been spoken with during this review. John persuaded her to give the relationship another try. Several friends recall the relationship during this time and Poppy appearing bored. By October 2018, Poppy decided to finally end the relationship. They both then commenced new relationships.
- 13.28 For practical reasons (connected to the end of their rental lease), and despite them no longer being in a romantic relationship, Poppy and John had remained living together in the apartment that they shared, prior to her planned move to another apartment in the same complex.

13.29 Poppy was due to move into her new apartment on Monday 17th December 2018. She had planned to take a train to London straight after work on Friday 14th December, and planned a weekend visit to friends in the south. She was murdered by John sometime in the early hours of Friday 14th December 2018.

Chronology

13.30 The case summary represents the sequence of events, as they occurred on the day/evening of the murder. The accounts given by John in his police interviews and his meeting with RG, are disregarded as his accounts were found to be untrue and misleading. There are some distressing details of injuries, which are contained at the express wish of Poppy's family.

- On the 13.12.2018, John had initially gone to lunch then spent the day with work colleagues at his work Christmas party. He had been drinking and made his way home at about 2.30am after visiting a takeaway restaurant. CCTV shows him walking towards his home at 2.43am.
- Poppy had spent the day at work and the evening of 13.12.2018, at the flat alone. It is believed she had been packing and watching TV. She was due to travel to London after work the following day to visit friends and was preparing to move into her new flat on Monday 17.12.2018.
- At some time after 2.57am, John let himself into the flat.
- John gives an account to police of what he said occurred next, most of which is disproven through forensic analysis.
- It is known that he called his dad at 8.40am, disclosing that something was wrong. His dad told him to call emergency services.
- At 8.48am on Friday 14.12.2018, West Yorkshire Ambulance Service received a call from a mobile telephone. It was John, who had been directed to call by his father (who had also called emergency services).
- John informed the Call Handler, that the woman with whom he shared the address from where he was calling, was not breathing. He then made some statements about what had occurred, which were later found to be lies (those accounts are discounted because of this).
- A short time later, following their emergency deployment, a number of Ambulance Service resources attended at the address from where the call had been made, which was an apartment block located in the city centre of Leeds.
- The attending staff, on entering the flat, immediately found a heavily bloodstained woman lying on her back in the hallway of the apartment, immediately behind the entrance door. This was Poppy. A bloodstained knife was on the floor, alongside her body.
- Poppy had sustained horrific and mortal injuries. Most evident at that time was a laceration to the left side of her neck. The subsequent post-mortem examination identified that Poppy had sustained over 100 injuries, including 23 stab wounds, which were part of a total of 49 knife wounds.
- As he was attending to Poppy, one of the Ambulance Service staff asked John (who was present in the apartment) if he was responsible for the injuries that had been sustained, to which he replied, 'Yes' but then John added further comments which were found to be lies, implying he had been defending himself. His verbatim statements are not contained here and were also discounted by the police.

Leeds Q (F) 2023

- Poppy was pronounced dead at the scene and her time of death was recorded as 9.03am on 14.12.2018.
- West Yorkshire Police officers also attended at the address and, having been briefed by the Ambulance Service staff on the comments made by John, he was arrested on suspicion of murder, taken into custody and away from the scene.
- It later became apparent that, following his attack of her, John had left Poppy in the apartment for a number of hours, and had driven several miles to dispose of his clothing and the knife that he had used in the attack. A knife was also found at the scene.
- It also became obvious that his attempts at CPR were only undertaken after he had returned to the apartment (after disposing of clothes), and only when advised to do so by the Ambulance Service after his call to them.
- John was the subject of three police suspect interviews under caution over the period of 14.12.2018 and 15.12.2018. During those interviews he maintained the same dishonest version of events, that he claimed had led to the death of Poppy. He lied repeatedly about the sequence of events.
- As there are no other physical witnesses to the events, the forensic examination and biological interpretation of the crime scene were critical to creating a true picture of Poppy's last moments. A Forensic Scientist attended the crime scene with a view to providing a biological interpretation of the crime scene. The following has some distressing detail, at the request of Poppy's family.
- The Scientist noted amongst other things, blood in Poppy's bedroom, indicating the attack had started there and extensive blood staining in the hallway area with evidence that Poppy had been moving on the floor whilst injured.
- Blood staining was found on the lock on the inside of the door to the premises consistent with someone with blood-stained hands trying to operate the internal locking mechanism. This is consistent with Poppy attempting to escape from the flat.
- 2 blood-stained footprints were noted at low level on the wall near to the entrance / exit to the flat. Blood staining to soles of Poppy's feet was also noted.
- Blood staining was also in the bathroom area which was consistent with a blood-stained individual cleaning themselves.
- A Postmortem Examination was carried out on 15.12.2018, by a Home Office Forensic Pathologist. No evidence of natural disease was present. During his examination, he noted in excess of 40 sharp force injuries to the head and neck. 23 stab wounds were recorded in that area of Poppy's body, as part of a total of 49 knife injuries to her body and more than 100 injuries overall (this will be discussed in analysis).
- Poppy had injuries to her hands which were consistent with defensive injuries. No abdominal injuries were recorded in the pathology report. The cause of death was given as Head and Neck Trauma.
- John was subsequently charged with Poppy's murder and remanded in custody.
- On his first appearance at Leeds Crown Court, in January 2019, he pleaded not guilty to the charge of murder, and he sustained that plea at further court appearances.
- Finally, at a subsequent court appearance in April 2019, he changed his plea to guilty and was duly convicted of Poppy's murder.

- He was sentenced to life imprisonment, with a direction from the judge that he serves a minimum of 16 years and two months in prison.

13.32 As referenced above, the level of violence used against Poppy is significant and is demonstrably evidence of overkill. This is discussed in the analysis section.

13.33 John's claim that he never had any intention to hurt Poppy was simply not credible. Despite finally acknowledging he was responsible for all of her injuries; he provided no explanation as to the extent and gravity of the injuries that he was responsible for inflicting upon her.

Chronology of evidence of Family, Friends, and Work Colleagues.

13.34 This section of the report seeks to chronicle the evidence provided by the respective witnesses and takes account of the criminal investigation. The disclosures made by John were proven in the main to be false, so they form minimal part of the analysis. The chronology is presented initially to assist with an understanding of what family, friends and colleagues knew at different times, before thematic analysis is considered.

13.35 The Chronology includes a timeline of relevant events and observations (Date / Source / Specifics of incidents. Unless otherwise stated, the source is family and/or police statement- MG11).

- July 2015 (source family/friends): Poppy and John meet at [REDACTED] University. They start going out over the summer months and continue long-distance relationship over the next year.
- September 2015: Poppy commences her Master's degree [REDACTED]. John returns to Leeds initially staying with his dad and stepmom. He [REDACTED] work [REDACTED] and moves into shared flat with working people of similar backgrounds.
- September 2016 (source family): Poppy completed her Master's and moves to stay with John initially in his rented accommodation and later to his dad's house so they could save money to travel. Poppy found a temporary job to save money to travel.
- 24.02.2017 (source diary and family): Travel commences. Poppy and John travel and Poppy keeps a diary. There are 2 relevant entries in an otherwise 'unremarkable' diary which documents places visited, people they met, what they saw and what they ate. The entries are:
- 08.06.2017 (source diary): Poppy and John had beers and drinks with friends then played cards in their room. Poppy's diary entry concludes for that day with, '*Me and John had an argument, and he threw my phone across the room. All good now though*'. Poppy made no further comment about this incident and did not explain the circumstances.
- 04.07.2017 (source Chloe interview and police statement): Chloe had a text message conversation with Poppy. She asked her how the trip had gone as they had been away for a long time just the two of them. She replied that it had gone well she said, '*they'd had a*

few drunken arguments but that that was to be expected'. Poppy did not expand on the arguments. Chloe said this was 'matter of fact' for Poppy. Chloe senses from the texts that Poppy did not want the travel to end and describes her 'dread' about coming back to England and having to work.

- 28.07.2017 (source diary): Poppy made a half page diary entry about their day in Sao Paulo, having dinner, drinks, and meeting friends. Her diary entry concludes for that day with, '*Got a bit too drunk and went back to room where John accidentally hit me in the face*'. Poppy made no further comment about this incident and did not explain the circumstances.
- 29.07.2017 at 01.30 hrs and 17.01 hrs (source Poppy's mother and iPhone images): Poppy took a 'selfie' picture, coinciding with the diary entry above where visible marks are on her nose and under her eye.
- 22.08.2017 (source diary and John's dad): Travel concludes. John stays with his family and Poppy goes south to stay with her family. Poppy then found a job as a Sports Data Analyst with William Hill in Leeds and moves to stay with John.
- November/December 2017 (source John's dad): Poppy and John move into a rented flat together in Leeds.
- 18.08.2018 (source Chloe's interview and police statement) Chloe describes being with Poppy and John at their flat with Poppy's mother and noticing that their relationship was 'strained'. Whilst in the same room, they were on their phones and conversation seemed strained.
- 22.08.2018 (source Kath's interview): At the house party with university friends, John and Poppy had argued during the evening, and when sleeping arrangements were being established, he insisted on having a room alone with Poppy. He went on to slam the bedroom door to insist on that being achieved, leaving half a dozen people to sleep outside on the landing. Aggression was not something she had witnessed before. Kath did find him to be what she described as "*passively controlling*" with Poppy. She gave examples of how he would give Poppy something of, what she described as a cold shoulder, if Poppy did not totally agree with what he wanted to do.
- September /October 2018 (source Larry interview and police statement) Work associate of Poppy. Used to socialise with Poppy and John through work and was at a number of social events when both there. One evening, he was out as part of a group, and they were both present. Exact date unknown they were in a bar and playing table football. He was sat with John who was watching Tony playing. John seemed agitated and said something like Tony was a "dickhead" or a "twat" in a nasty, derogatory tone. He said Tony was 'so annoying and competitive and always had to win'. It seemed like the comments made were totally out of context to the environment they were in. He didn't reply as he was new to the team and liked Tony. John didn't say anything more and they had had a few drinks at this point.
- Early November 2018: date unknown (source Larry interview): Poppy, Larry and Tony were chatting in a bar. Poppy had never disclosed to him that there were any problems between

her and John, so Larry asked where he was. Poppy told him that she had some news and that they had broken up. Poppy didn't go into details about why, she just said it didn't work out. After that night Larry regularly asked Poppy if she was okay. Poppy always said she was fine and that 'she and John still talked and watched TV together'. Larry recalls that John seemed to be struggling to accept that they had broken up. She gave an example, that if she was going out, he would ask to go with her, and she would have to say no as they weren't a couple anymore.

- 05.11.2018 (source letting agent statement): Poppy contacts them to view a flat. Poppy begins to tell colleagues she is moving into her own flat.
- 06.11.2018 (source letting agent statement): Poppy views and agrees that she wants the flat which was not available until 17.12.2018 due to an existing tenant. The landlord approves and Poppy secures the flat the following day (07.11.2018).
- 06.11.2018 (source- Doug police MG11): There was a small Christmas party, and he becomes aware/ sensed that Poppy and Tony are potentially romantically involved.
- 09.11.2018 (source John's dad- MG11): John visited his family alone to explain that Poppy was going on a works social event, and she wanted to end their relationship, but they were going to try and stay friends. John was upset about the breakup, and his dad describes him 'choking back tears' when he told him'.
- 09.11.2018: (source Tony interview and police statement). Tony explained that he had gone out with work friends including Poppy. They had drinks, played table tennis, and then went for a curry before more drinks. At the end of the night, it was just him and Poppy talking, and she revealed that she had split up with John and was moving out. They start dancing together, and they kiss for the first time (and this is the start of their new relationship, and they start to see each other after this night). Tony was then conscious of a bright light shining on them and initially thought it was someone taking a group photo, but the light remained on, shining directly in his face. This lasted approximately a minute and Tony couldn't make out who was doing it. Suddenly the light got more intense as it got closer. He realised that he and Poppy were being filmed.
- Poppy said, 'to just ignore it', also not realising what or who it was. Suddenly, Tony felt a punch to his face and the light went out and then he was punched again in the face. He grabbed his assailant and realised it was John. They wrestled for about 20 seconds as Tony tried to defend himself and prevent being hit again. Bouncers intervened and they were both ejected from the club. Outside, Poppy was trying to restrain John and Tony used a phrase in his police statement that Poppy 'dragged John away', as John continued to say, 'let's finish it, let's sort it', appearing to want the attack to continue. TB clarified that comment with Tony, who confirmed he meant 'ushered, or coaxed' John to try to calm John's reaction.
- Tony describes in his later police statement that John was agitated and swearing a lot. It was about 2 am. Tony did not know what to do as he had not been in a situation like that before. Tony did not call the police. Poppy took John away and Tony made his way home. Poppy messaged him the next morning to say, 'apologies for dragging you into my shit'.

Tony replied, 'Don't worry, I hope you are, OK?' and 'There's nothing to be sorry about. Let me know if you need anything'. Poppy later explained that John had '*come out on his own, as he had a feeling something wasn't right and that something was going on*'.

- This event is described differently by Terry, John's work colleague. He recalls that John told him that Poppy had come home after a works party and was 'acting strange' and Poppy had then told him that whilst out she 'had kissed another man'. John told Terry he 'was bothered' but accepted it as he knew his relationship was over with Poppy and they were just living together until she moved out.
- Poppy described this incident to her friend Liz when she visited her on 30.11.2018. Liz recalled that Poppy told her that John had punched Tony but, in the process, Poppy got 'hit' as well. This was not referenced by anyone else during the review, but this does not mean it did not occur. Poppy also explained to her that a couple of weeks later Poppy and Tony started dating and John was aware of it, and John had told Poppy that he thought she was being disrespectful by dating Tony.
- 10.11.2018 (source Chloe interview): Poppy visited Chloe in Loughborough for a pre-planned visit and said she 'needed a debrief on life'. She informed her that she had split up with John and she said she had not been happy for a while. Poppy describes the incident of the 09.11.2018. Poppy had not told John what bar she would be in that night. She had gone out after work. John had turned up unannounced. They had split up. She said she had kissed a work colleague. Poppy told Chloe that she was 'furious' with John and deduced he had either followed her to the venue or had tracked her there using 'find my phone' or other personal tracking software. Poppy informed Chloe that when they got back to their flat, Poppy was furious, and they argued. Poppy was demanding to know what he was doing, repeatedly asked him why he was there, and John would not give her an answer.
- Chloe asked about their sleeping arrangements. Poppy explained until the night before, they still shared the same room, but Poppy then moved into the spare room. Whilst seemingly unusual, John had asked her to stay in his bed with him (in a non-sexual way) as he wanted to be close to her. Poppy explained that she had agreed as John was upset, and she felt sorry for him. She also wanted to make it less awkward while she was still living there.
- 13.11.2018 (source Liz interview and police statement): Via text, Poppy told Liz that she and John were splitting up and that she had a new flat. She explained that it was her decision to split, but also revealed at that point they had still been sharing the bed.
- 15.11.2018 (source John's dad- MG11): John informed his dad that Poppy had started a new relationship with someone who worked in her office. John said he had also met and was seeing someone, and that Poppy was going to get her own place in their complex on Monday 17.12.2018. John informed his dad it was going to be an 'amicable break up that Poppy had initiated but they were going through the process of sorting things out'. He further disclosed that there were some moments when Poppy was unhappy (maybe not speaking or argumentative) and there was a mood between them but no arguments. It was just the difficult situation of two people breaking up but having to share the same

accommodation. John was aware that Poppy was seeing someone else but told his dad that he was certain this relationship hadn't started until the relationship with him had ended.

- 17.11.2018 (source Tara- police MG11): Tara meets John for the first time in a bar in Leeds on a night out. He asks for her number before he leaves. They then start to exchange general (non-personal) text messages. Most days there would be in the region of 20 messages.
- 19.11.2018 (source letting agent statement): Poppy signed the tenancy agreement on this day and placed a bank transfer for the first month's rent on 29.11.2018.
- 23.11.2018 (source Chloe interview and police MG11): Via text message, Poppy informed Chloe, 'It's very up and down. One day he's fine and the next he's really not. So, it's not great really. Three weeks to go, Ha Ha'. Chloe expressed hope that it would go by without trouble and Chloe replied, 'Yeah, I hope so too, Obviously I don't want things to end badly but it's kinda' heading more towards that ATM¹⁰'.
- 23.11.2018 (source Tara- police MG11): John asks Tara on a date, and they meet for drinks in Leeds on a Friday night. They talk about families, travels, and work. They agree to meet again at the end of the date. He does not mention Poppy.
- 23.11.2018 (source Tony interview): Poppy texted Tony after a night out. Tony had got into a taxi after dropping Poppy home at 02.30, and Poppy explained John was at the gate '10 seconds after her' and was concerned that John may have met Tony at the gate. She was not concerned that she was followed but added, in response to Tony's question whether she was ok, 'apart from hearing I'm the coldest hearted biggest c**t in the world, all is good'. The following morning, Poppy described how she had to, 'listen to how apparently horrible I am for about an hour'.
- 24.11.2018 (source Larry and Tony interviews): Tony explained that he and Poppy went to a bar with friends. Poppy realised that John was already in there and said, 'Let's not go in there'. Tony encouraged her by saying, 'it will be fine'. Once inside, Tony saw John with Poppy, he was shouting at her for 15-20 seconds telling her that he was not happy with how she treated him. John then approached Tony and attempted to apologise for assaulting him and tried to shake his hand telling him that 'he didn't realise that he and Poppy had broken up'. Tony told him, 'Well you have, Get over it'.
- Larry tried to de-escalate the situation and spoke with John at the bar. John asked, 'Is she following me here' and Larry reassured him that it was coincidence that they had ended up in the same bar. He got the impression that John appeared to be struggling to accept that he and Poppy had broken up. John told Larry, that they had 'not really broken up'.
- Tony walked Poppy home to her flat and describes that she was unconcerned with John's behaviour, telling him, 'don't worry, I know where you are'.

¹⁰ ATM- 'At the Moment'

Leeds Q (F) 2023

- 25.11.2018 (source tenancy firm MG11): John emailed and asks about the position with a new tenant moving into the flat. He is informed a new 6-month contract would be required after appropriate checks were conducted.
- 27.11.2018 (source tenancy firm MG11): John emailed and said there was no new tenant.
- 29.11.2018 (source John interview): John was out for the evening. Poppy told him she was staying at home but in fact went out with Tony, getting home at 10pm. When John returned, he asked her if she had had a good night. Poppy said that she 'hadn't done much'. He told her that he knew she had lied and that she had been out with Tony. Neither Poppy nor Tony knew how he was aware of that.
- 30.11.2018 (source Liz interview): Poppy described this incident to her friend Liz when she visited her on 30.11.2018. Poppy said that John had punched Tony but, in the process, Poppy got hit as well. This is not documented anywhere else, but is a significant statement made by Poppy to her friend. A couple of weeks after that incident Poppy and Tony started dating officially and John was aware of it. John had told Poppy that he thought she was being disrespectful by dating Tony.
- 01.12.2018 (source John interview): Poppy went to Nottingham to meet university friends.
- 01.12.2018 (source Tara- police MG11): John and Tara meet for a second date on a Saturday night in Leeds. Prior to meeting, John offered his spare room if Tara wanted to stay. They talked about ex-partners on the date and John told her he had split from his ex-partner in September and that they had used to live together but she had moved out when they split up. He said, 'things had just fizzled out between them' and it was an amicable split, but he did not say her name or how long they dated for. Tara stayed overnight, leaving the following day at noon.
- 05.12.2018 (source Tony's interview and text messages): Poppy explained to Tony that she was going to a pub that evening with John to try to reconcile their friendship, and by implication minimise any further upset. She didn't really want to keep the friendship going but was trying to keep John calm. She messaged Tony and said, 'Sorry, meeting at the pub now, to prove we can be friends and watch the football together'. Tony messaged her later in the evening to ask how the night had gone. Poppy informed him that she had told John she was going to be seeing Tony on 8.12.2018. Poppy also explained that John had had some drinks with their friend Terry, so he was a little drunk and a bit more emotional than her. She stated, '*It was interesting when John cried a few times, but we got over that*'.
- Terry (in his police statement) recalls being with John and Poppy that evening watching football. John had asked him to leave at half time as he wanted to see how they would get on 'socialising as friends after their relationship had come to an end'. At work the next day John told Terry that after he had left, they both got on fine and there were no apparent issues. He did not witness the emotion allegedly displayed by John.
- 06.12.2018 (source Tony's interview and police statement): Poppy and Tony went out with work colleagues and in the early hours, as they were waiting outside the venue in the rain,

Poppy decided she wanted to go to Tony's flat. Tony says that he asked her to message John, not to ask for permission, but so he would know where she was. Poppy then stayed overnight at Tony's flat. Tony explained he wanted to take things slowly to respect her previous relationship.

- This is slightly inconsistent with John's text message to an [REDACTED] friend (who is known to have been Poppy's friend from university), where he states, 'I am only awake because I woke up at 4.30 and text Poppy to see if she was okay because she's not come home yet. Then she said she was being a dickhead and stayed over at Tony's'. Classic'. From this information, where he recounts a text message exchange with Poppy, it appears that John was checking up on Poppy.
- 07.12.2018 (source John's dad- MG11): John's dad asked if he wanted to come over for dinner. John stated that Poppy had stayed out all night at her new friend's (Tony) house the night before.
- 07.12.2018 (source Tony's interview and police statement): Poppy went for lunch with John, and they had a discussion. She later told Tony that John said he was really disappointed in her for staying overnight and that it was disrespectful.
- 07.12.2018 (source Tara- police MG11): John goes to meet Tara for their third date in the Huddersfield area. John met her parents before they went for a meal and drinks. John stayed at their house overnight. Through subsequent text messages, they agreed to meet up on Saturday 15.12.2018. John's dad also said that John told him had stayed over with his new girlfriend.
- 09.12.2018: John continued with text messages to his [REDACTED] friend. John tells him, 'Poppy is now dating her new guy which is a bit weird I'll admit considering she hasn't even moved out yet' and, 'I won't get into it, but she just literally doesn't even give a shit about me. But then also says I've not done anything wrong and it's all her and she wants to be friends. She's a totally different person honestly, it's crazy', and finally, 'I even said a week or so ago I'd appreciate it if she could wait until she moved out, then it's fine it's her life, but clearly she couldn't wait...'
- 11.12.2018 (source Gary's police statement): Gary bumped into John in Leeds city centre. They chatted and he said he was shopping for Christmas presents. He said something like "So I guess you've heard about me and Poppy'. Gary said yes and describes that he could see John was upset and struggling. He said it had been tough and he was sad about it. He then said something like "So I guess Tony and Poppy are a thing now?' It is of note that this location is described as near William Hill, and potential relevant as a location that John may have been loitering.
- John said that it didn't feel great that Poppy moved on so quickly and Gary sympathised with him. Gary stated that John did not seem angry, just really sad. John said that he wanted to continue to be friends with Gary and 'maybe they could all still hang out'. Gary expressed surprise at how emotional John appeared to be as they were not particularly close.

Leeds Q (F) 2023

- 12.12.2018 (source John's dad- MG11): Poppy went with John for a family meal at his dad's house. There were a few tears¹¹ between everyone acknowledging the end of the relationship, and in John's dad's words, 'part of a knowledge and acceptance that it would be the last meeting'.
- 12.12.2018 (source Ben MG11, Tony MG11 and TB interview): Poppy's work Christmas party. Poppy stayed overnight at Tony's after the party. She left and went home in a taxi on the morning of 13.12.2018.
- 13.12.2018 (source Tony's interview). Poppy and Tony spent the evening at their respective flats, exchanging a number of text messages throughout the evening. The last was about 10.07pm.
- 13.12.2018 (source John's dad): John and he arranged by text to meet the following day for lunch and some shopping in Leeds.
- 13.12.2018 (source Tony police MG11 and TB interview): Tony worked during the day and stayed in during the evening. Poppy and Tony exchanged multiple texts during the evening, the last being at 10.07pm. She had conveyed her intention to go to London straight after work on 14.12.2018, by train to meet friends.
- 13.12.2018 (source Tara- police MG11): John and Tara exchange a number of texts about Christmas shopping, his work, and his Christmas lunch, and mainly about her upcoming visit to France. They exchanged dozens of texts during the evening, the last one timed at 23.52. The tone of the final text was relaxed and unsurprising- 'Thanks it's been a lot of fun¹². Think it ends soon. So hopefully not too rough tomorrow. Sleep well. XXX' Tara did not see that until the next day at 07.49hrs, when she texted John- he did not reply.
- 13.12.2018 (source David's police MG11): David had a conversation with John at the works Christmas party at about 11.30-11.45pm. He asked him how he was. John then disclosed the status of their relationship. David revealed that John said that Poppy had been distant for a while, and she'd said that she didn't feel like the relationship was right. She said it wasn't him and that he was nice but that they'd grown apart. He said that he'd given her space as she didn't want to talk about it much but then she'd said that she didn't want to be with him. He said he was fine, and he seemed very calm about it. He was very diplomatic in how he spoke about it and said that she was seeing someone else, and he was also dating someone new. At this point John had been drinking and was described as drunk but not incoherent and he seemed to be enjoying the night. David left at 12.30am.
- 13.12.2018 (source Terry's police MG11): Terry attended the Christmas party and was with John who he described as 'drunk but happy in himself' He described his behaviour as, 'he seemed to be enjoying himself'. They moved onto another bar with friends at 01:10 on 14.12.2018 and he last saw John there at about 02.00.

¹¹ Described as an emotional goodbye by John's father.

¹² This appears to be a reference to the Christmas party ending soon.

- At 02:20 hours, Terry received four calls from John's phone which he missed and didn't answer. Terry called him back at 03:05 hours the same date and his phone went straight to answer phone.
- At 02.43, (Source Police Timeline), CCTV showed John leaving takeaway restaurant and police approximate his walking journey home, to his arrival at the flats at about 02.57 hrs.
- Between 05.09-07.21, there was a gap in the GPRS (mobile communications data) which tends to suggest that John had turned his phone off. However, at 05.40, there was an ANPR hit on the number plate of the car driven by John in an area outside Leeds (this is consistent with the later interview where John agreed he had left the flat and 'driven around'. It was determined this was the period when John disposed of clothing.
- 14.12.2023 (source Poppy's parents): 07.34hrs - Poppy's WhatsApp message from a friend is opened and shown as 'read'.
- 14.12.2023 (source John's dad): 08.40hrs John calls his dad- the call is initially missed but he calls John back. John answered after 2 or 3 rings. John explained that 'something was wrong' and then proceeded to give his dad an account of what had happened (that account was proven to be untrue and so is not repeated here). John's dad tells him to call the police and an ambulance, and he also calls an ambulance.
- 15.12.2018 (source Tony's police MG11): Poppy had intended to go to London after leaving work to meet up with some university friends.

14. Section 14- Analysis

14.1 This section of the report seeks to analyse the evidence provided by the respective witnesses and takes account of the criminal investigation. The disclosures made by John were proven in the main to be false, so they form minimal part of the analysis.

Coercive control

14.2 Coercive control is defined as, any incident or pattern of incidents **of controlling, coercive or threatening** behaviour, **violence**, or **abuse** between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.

14.3 Coercive control and behaviour are a strategic form of ongoing oppression, a continuing act, or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim, to instil fear and self-doubt. The abuser, in this case John, will use tactics, such as monitoring communication and movements, as a controlling effort, to manipulate the relationship. These behaviours are often covert and subtle and not obvious to witnesses, or indeed, even the victim who may acquiesce rather than upset the status quo in a relationship, by challenging their partner.

- 14.4 Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.
- 14.5 Many victims are unaware that they are subject to coercive or controlling behaviours. Many victims fail to realise the significance of seemingly minor assaults, jealousy, or possessive behaviour, or the 'cold shoulder' treatment used by abusers as a means of controlling their victims. Additionally, with the absence of explicit physical violence, some victims do not necessarily recognise or see themselves as victims.
- 14.6 The recent change in legislation, extending and explaining the definition of behaviours associated with domestic abuse, and the growth of academic research is starting to have impact where victims finally recognise their vulnerabilities. However, much more is required to inform the public understanding of how destructive these behaviours can be.
- 14.7 Whilst there is evidence that some victims of domestic abuse (including coercive or controlling behaviour) have extensive engagement with agencies, this is not always the case, and it is therefore crucial to engage with family, friends, and colleagues to understand the dynamics of the relationship. This also enables the identification of any factors, behaviour, incidents, or events that may have been relevant to the objectives of the review.
- 14.8 There is some evidence of John (in isolated incidents) displaying some of these behaviours and this theme is examined below. Because the behaviours were not consistently seen by witnesses, they were not identified. It is also significant that Poppy chose not to disclose or discuss behaviours which have now come to light. This may be because she did not recognise herself as a victim or did not want John to be viewed in a bad light.
- 14.9 Based on what was known before the murder, no one individual had the full picture about what was happening in Poppy's life and therefore the tragic events of 14.12.2018 could not have reasonably been predicted.
- 14.10 Those that knew Poppy and/or John including their families, personal friends, and work colleagues, were consistent in their views that prior to the murder, on the surface level, theirs 'appeared to be' a sound and harmonious relationship. During this review process, no one individual highlighted that they were concerned about Poppy's safety **prior** to her murder and none of the witnesses interviewed believed that John represented a threat to Poppy.
- 14.11 The author (RG) assessed, from her parents and brother to her friends and work colleagues, that there was a consistent belief that, had Poppy perceived there to be any danger to her own wellbeing, she would not have remained in the apartment with John. This is likely because she did not see herself as a victim.
- 14.12 However, during the review, after reflecting on their observations and memories of Poppy and John, a number of Poppy's friends drew attention to separate incidents they had

observed. Taken in isolation, they did not flag significant concerns at the time, but now take on a new significance.

- 14.13 Whilst Poppy and John's relationship did not involve consistent periods of abusive behaviour, there are some relevant individual incidents that could be described as manipulative and jealous acts that sought to coerce and control. There were some individual incidents (the 'accidental hit', the phone throwing, the slamming of doors, the sulking and possessiveness) which were deemed to be minor and insignificant at the time. However, there was also the unprovoked violent attack on Tony which could have indicated a more significant risk factor.
- 14.14 Although John had never verbalised that he wished to cause Poppy harm, in examining these separate incidents, it is now clear that there were flashes of controlling behaviours which show that John was not only manipulative and jealous, but also capable of sudden and unprovoked violence.
- 14.15 Looking at the incidents that occurred when Poppy was travelling with John, the initial panel debated the selfie photographs and diary entry at length. The photos were discussed by the first panel felt to evidence that 'something' unusual and negative had occurred and that was very likely to have been an assault as described in the partial things Poppy said about them. It wasn't however presented significantly enough by Poppy for anyone to have considered that it required further action, referral to police or further comment. However, Poppy was documenting something out of the ordinary, and had more probably than not, photographed her face when John was unaware, possibly sleeping. Poppy would not have taken those photographs unless she had wanted at that exact moment to document her facial injuries and upset. This is clear on a balance of probabilities.
- 14.16 The panel agreed that the images indicated that something had occurred which had shaken Poppy, and which was evidence of something unpleasant. However, it was the view of the initial DHR Panel that the photographs, with no verified detail of the alleged events nor any verified context, did not represent evidence of an 'ongoing abusive relationship' at that time. This incident was discussed as an isolated incident, but not in the context of other information now known to the panel. The panel discussed their view that the relatively minor injury could have been caused accidentally, recklessly, or intentionally, but were unable with any certainty to say which. This incident is discussed later in the 8 stages of domestic homicide (stage 3).
- 14.17 It was the strong view of Poppy's family that the fact that she took two selfie photographs was significant, as it was unusual for her, and they felt that she wanted to record her injuries. They also felt that she looked distressed in the photographs. In the re-examination of these incidents the Chair (TB) examined these conflicting/inconsistent points of view. Reviewing photographs, diary entries and information in hindsight makes for uncomfortable reading, as it is impossible to have predicted that that incident could have escalated to the level of violence resulting in Poppy's death.
- 14.18 The initial panel had appeared to discuss the information from the evidential standard of proof for criminal trial. The 'burden of proof' makes it mandatory for the prosecution to prove the guilt of an accused person beyond reasonable doubt. Given what was known at the time

of the review about these incidents, it seems unlikely that the criminal threshold could have been achieved to satisfy the prospect of a charge of assault being brought. That does not mean an assault did not occur. It is important to recognise that this matter was never reported, so it is a hypothetical consideration.

- 14.19 TB considers that the threshold for examining these incidents should be on the balance of probabilities. This means a standard means that a court would be satisfied with as an event that occurred if the court considers that, on the evidence, the occurrence of the event was more likely than not.
- 14.20 Poppy's family explained that it was not her habit to keep a diary, but she did so whilst travelling with John in 2017. The purpose of a diary is to detail events and keep a record for posterity. Whilst we are unable to state definitively, the fact that Poppy wrote about these incidents in her travel diary knowing that it would be read, also cannot be dismissed.
- 14.21 Poppy's family and friends all agreed that Poppy was not prone to taking 'selfie' photos. In her 12,000 saved images to her phone (iCloud), her family found only 5 'selfies' which were taken of Poppy by herself. All other images were of people and places she visited, or Poppy included in group shots.
- 14.22 In an otherwise 'unremarkable' diary, which records places visited, food eaten and people she met, Poppy records the two specific incidents that are relevant to understanding the dynamic of the relationship at that time.
- 14.23 On 08.06.2017, Poppy made a diary entry about their day. In summary, Poppy and John had beers and drinks with friends then played cards in their room. Poppy's diary entry concludes for that day: 'Me and John had an argument, and he threw my phone across the room. All good now though'. Poppy made no further comment about this incident and did not explain the circumstances. Whilst there is limited information about this incident, it could be interpreted as either an attempt to scare Poppy, as a loss of control or as a deliberate example of his controlled aggression. In hindsight, this is a deliberate and controlling act.
- 14.24 On 28.07.2017, Poppy made a half page diary entry about their day in Sao Paulo, describing having dinner, drinks, and meeting friends. Her diary entry concludes for that day with, 'Got a bit too drunk and went back to room where John accidentally hit me in the face'. Poppy made no further comment about this incident and did not explain the circumstances.
- 14.25 What is unusual is that, in support of the incident actually occurring, in the early hours of 29.07.2017 at 01.30 hrs, Poppy took a 'selfie' picture, which her family subsequently recovered during the review process. The image is shadowy and dark but there is a mark under Poppy's right eye and on her nose. Poppy's family firmly believe that those marks were an injury, consistent with what Poppy recorded in her diary. As the family know her best, the weight of their assertion that this injury was not present in the photographs in the days before must be considered.
- 14.26 Poppy took a much clearer 'selfie' image at 17.01 hrs on that day, which shows the marks more visibly: a cut on the bridge of her nose and ½ inch mark under her eye. The timing of the image taken after a night out and reported on in her diary are intrinsically linked. Poppy's

family are able to state with certainty that those marks were not on her face in images they saw from the day before. The family are clear that in their opinion, Poppy looks distressed. In every other image they have of their daughter, she is smiling and happy and therefore this is a relevant observation. The initial panel could have observed the intimate and personal knowledge of their daughters' habits and behaviours to inform the report.

- 14.27 Research has shown that victims of domestic abuse downplay incidents where they have been subject to any form of abuse, often excusing their injuries as accidental or non-intentional.
- 14.28 Whilst it is impossible to state the 'injury' was a deliberate act, it is clear that Poppy wanted the circumstances of the 'accidental hit' to be recorded in both written and photographic form. In the absence of any other information from Poppy, whilst this information may not meet the threshold for a criminal enquiry (and /or conviction), it is possibly reflective of the physical assault, which Poppy documented. It is important to clarify that on a balance of probabilities the initial panel believed the injuries were caused by John recklessly, but because it was not reported, it became a challenging area to discuss the likely intentional nature of the injury. The second panel considered this issue at length and on the balance of probabilities also agreed that this incident did occur, hence why Poppy documented her injuries.
- 14.29 That incident was never further mentioned by Poppy to her family or her friends, and the diary suggests that they 'made up' the next day, or at the very least appeared to have continued their travels without further diary entries about the incident. She did not bring the entry to the attention of anybody at the time, or subsequently. One can assume, as they were travelling together, the pressure to remain on good terms was more pressing than if she had been at home with family and friends. Poppy's family also confirm that it was entirely within her nature not to mention such personal incidents to anyone else. The fact that she was also in South America, meant that there was little she could have practically done when she was alone with John.
- 14.30 However, although Poppy made no concerning disclosures to friends or family, the trip was not without some challenges. Poppy's friend Chloe stated that she had a text conversation with Poppy after she returned from travelling in South America. Chloe asked her how it had gone (as Poppy and John had been away for a long time with just the two of them). Poppy replied that, 'it had gone well' and she said they had had 'a few drunken arguments but that that was to be expected'. As indicated, this underplaying of arguments is perhaps indicative of how Poppy kept the detail of her relationship private and did not expose the other incidents.
- 14.31 We know John is violent- he committed the ultimate act of aggression when he murdered Poppy. It is necessary then to examine other incidents (however low level they appear) to identify any other warning signs that could have been present. John had demonstrated aggression: he physically punched Poppy's new boyfriend Tony, he had caused her injury on at least one occasion, possibly two if the evidence of Liz is also considered, and he slammed the door at a house party only months before. He threw her phone across the room when she would have been reliant on that for communication with her family. At the

very least this behaviour is reckless as to the possibility of damage. The author considers this is demonstrable controlling behaviour.

- 14.32 Whilst not considering John to be a physical risk to Poppy at the time, Poppy's university friend, Kath, describes John as demonstrating behaviour that she considered to be passive control. Following return from travelling, Kath recalls the incident of the slamming of a door in September 2017. Poppy and John had an argument at a house party where her university friends were present. Poppy was upset and crying, and went to a bedroom, and John also went into the bedroom. This was the first occasion she saw Poppy crying when with John. Kath heard shouting coming from the room (there were a number of others present at the house who have not been spoken to as part of this review but provided emails summaries of their recollections to Kath. They are all consistent). Whilst no violence was observed, Poppy's distress was visible to all of those present. As students, they were all often used to sharing rooms and beds, and that had been expected by those staying overnight after the party. John later refused for anyone to share the room, causing several others to sleep in the hallway on the floor. A number of Poppy's friends specifically recall that event which they describe as controlling.
- 14.33 In a second recorded incident, Royal Ascot was running from 19th-23rd June 2018. Poppy had attempted to terminate the relationship with John in May 2018, but he had persuaded her to give it another go. Kath also describes John's possessiveness at that Ascot visit in 2018, where a large group of friends had attended. Poppy and John had got separated in the crowd as they walked to the train- a not unusual incident. John repeatedly called Poppy and Kath (at least 11 times each), until he caught up with them. Kath describes this as John, 'checking up on her'. They all knew the route they were going home. Kath recalls seeing Poppy on the train carriage, with John sat beside her. Poppy was crying, but Kath cannot explain why that occurred. This was the second occasion she saw Poppy crying when with she was with John.
- 14.34 Kath and several other friends recall the following day as unusual. They say that John acted 'strangely', in a way Kath described as possessive and controlling. As the group watched TV, John got his iPad out and insisted that Poppy watch football with him. He put the iPad on loud whilst the TV played, which the group all found odd. As part of the same incident, Kath describes that they were all tired, and Poppy wanted to stay with her friends to watch TV, however, John repeatedly insisted that she go with him to meet his friend at the pub. Poppy relented but returned after ½ hour. Whilst low level, this behaviour is deemed to be an attempt to control Poppy by insisting that she agreed to John's wishes. Additionally, we knew that a course of conduct regarding coercive and controlling behaviour, as well as stalking, often has a number of 'low level' incidents that together create a more sinister narrative.
- 14.35 From about May 2018, Poppy sought to end their relationship, but she was convinced not to do so by John and the relationship had sustained until September 2018. Against John's wishes, and despite his attempts to persuade her otherwise, Poppy then made the firm decision that the relationship had run its course. Poppy began to tell friends, family, and colleagues that they had split up. John appeared to minimise the split, by telling people they were still together.

- 14.36 Each of the witnesses explain that when Poppy has shared that decision with her family, friends, and colleagues, she was not always being overtly emotional. She is described as being considered and matter of fact in her manner when breaking the news to a variety of witnesses. This is consistent with how her family describe her in that she would not be overtly emotional, she was rational and quite controlled about exhibiting her feelings.
- 14.37 There is a lack of consistency about how John presented himself during the period after they split. John gave Terry a very different account of the night he attacked Tony, making no disclosure about the assault.
- 14.38 Some witnesses saw John as accepting the situation. He was 'matter of fact' with some people describing himself as sad but accepting of Poppy's decision. He had started a new relationship. However, evidence from his father and some friends suggests that John was less controlled. Additionally, he didn't seem to mention the new relationship or the fact he had met Tara's parents, and controlled the narrative regarding Poppy and Tony, with himself being painted as the victim of Poppy's awful (and in his mind), 'disrespectful' behaviour. There were a number of emotional displays, crying in public and his apparent attempts to reconcile with Poppy. Whether it be his discussions with his closest friend, Terry, his lunch time discussion with Gary, or his casual conversations with his work colleagues on the night of the attack about his frustrations, it is clear from some witness accounts that he was finding the breakup to be emotionally challenging. The information gleaned from Poppy's text messages to Tony about the evening John was crying in the pub, speaks to his emotional fragility.
- 14.39 The initial panel concluded that references to John sometimes turning up at bars where Poppy was socialising with work colleagues did not represent any form of persistent stalking or harassment, that would satisfy the criminal burden of proof. Several witnesses describe seeing Poppy and John together in the same location, after they had split up. A number of witnesses describe that Poppy was trying to part on good terms and remain friendly. The second panel considered this information in a new light, when looking at the following statements from her friend Chloe. Reflecting on the facts now known, the behaviour had started to become persistent.
- 14.40 However, despite an absence of information about 'persistent' stalking, Poppy was upset that John had turned up in the bar on the night of the assault on Tony, uninvited. Whilst his appearance that did not cause her to change her behaviour, she expressed her frustration to her friend. Poppy was clear when speaking to Chloe that she believed that John has somehow been tracking her, as she had not told him where she would be. John later told Poppy that he had sensed 'something was not right' and went out alone to find her. He had no right to do this as they were no longer a couple.
- 14.41 Either interpretation is worrying. If John was tracking her- that is controlling. If he searched for her, by going from bar to bar, that also demonstrates a worrying behaviour. This information, coupled with John's challenge that she had lied to him about going out on 29.11.2018, meant that Poppy was concerned that John was at the least, checking up on her. Whilst these individual incidents may not satisfy the criminal burden of proof for

consistent or persistent stalking, John was determined in his desire to know where Poppy was.

- 14.42 Whilst Poppy has sought and found another apartment to move into within the same complex, she has taken the practical decision to remain living in the apartment with John until her own apartment was available, on 17.12.2018. This decision appears to have been purely practically and financially based. Witness statements indicate that this action may have given John some false hope that they may reconcile.
- 14.43 Poppy had disclosed to two friends that after they split in September, she continued, initially, to share the same bed with John, in a non-intimate way. This potentially could have been interpreted by John as a sign of hope, despite the fact that their relationship had ended. The later physical attack of Tony was a significant event as Poppy subsequently moved into another bedroom in the apartment. The realisation that their relationship had little hope of reconciling would have been a further trigger (stage 4).
- 14.44 Recognising the awkwardness of the situation that Poppy was in, but not the danger, Tony, Gary, and Doug had all offered Poppy the possibility of staying at their apartments. Poppy declined the offers, a point that signifies that she was not fearful at that point and potentially had not recognised the risk that was posed. She was however in danger from this point. Separation in a relationship is a key issue that remains under-researched but can be a point of heightened tension in a relationship, particularly if one party feels rejected.
- 14.45 Safer Leeds communicate the risks at the point of separation in their one-minute guides¹³. This is particularly relevant in Poppy's case. It is often assumed that a victim choosing to separate from an abusive partner or leave an abusive home will reduce the risk to them (and their children of further harm). However, evidence from research and surveys of victims indicates that the risk of further violence and harm actually increases at the point at which a victim leaves a perpetrator. A study of 200 women's experiences of domestic abuse commissioned by Women's Aid (Humphreys & Thiara, 2002) found that 76% of separated women had experienced post-separation verbal and emotional abuse and violence, including: 41% subjected to serious threats towards themselves or their children; 23% subjected to physical violence; 6% subjected to sexual violence; and 36% stated that this violence was ongoing. For 60% of the women in the study, fears that they or their children would be killed by the perpetrator had motivated their decision to leave the abusive relationship. There is evidence that the risk of domestic homicide is increased post-separation. In Leeds, separation has been a factor in a significant number of domestic homicides (more than half) in recent years.
- 14.46 John's behaviour demonstrated he was feeling increasingly jealous of Poppy's new partner, and the fact that she, as would be the norm in a developing relationship, began to stay over with him is likely to have exacerbated those feelings. John had disclosed these frustrations to his dad, several friends and in text messages to his [REDACTED] friend. This does not mean this relationship was the specific trigger for his action but does acknowledge his increasing jealousy and frustration. The 8 stages of domestic homicide, specifically reference jealousy as a trigger for escalation in the character traits that a perpetrator may possess (stage 4 /5).

¹³ [https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Domestic Violence - Risk at the point of separation.pdf](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Domestic%20Violence%20-%20Risk%20at%20the%20point%20of%20separation.pdf)

- 14.47 John used extreme violence against Poppy as he killed her. Overkilling involves “the use of excessive, gratuitous violence beyond that necessary to cause the victim’s death.” One of the most significant harms is caused by ‘overkill’ because, as in this case, it causes intense distress to the families of victims knowing not only that their loved one has been murdered but that such extensive and gratuitous violence has been perpetrated against her.
- 14.48 The *Femicide Census 2009-2018* and the *Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review 2023*, both define ‘Overkilling’. The census highlighted that there was evidence of overkilling in over half the femicides across the ten-year period. The Sentencing Review indicated 47% cases involved overkilling.
- 14.49 In more than half (56%) of the overkill cases involving a male perpetrator examined as part of the 2023 Sentencing Review (6.4.1), feelings of jealousy or resentment at the end of the relationship could be considered to be the catalyst for the killing. Of all 99 cases which involved a male perpetrator, jealousy, or resentment at the end of the relationship was apparent and a perceived diminution in control thought to be a catalyst in the killing in 44 (44%) cases.
- 14.50 There is significant research to highlight the fact that the risk to women, from their male partners, rises significantly when there is a withdrawal of commitment to the relationship or a separation. The renowned expert in the field of Domestic Homicide, Dr Jane Monckton Smith, identifies the eight-stage relationship progression to Domestic Abuse Homicides, which include many coercive or controlling behaviours:
- **Stage 1. A pre-relationship history of stalking or abuse by the perpetrator:** John’s previous history is unknown, and it therefore cannot be considered for this review.
 - **Stage 2. The romance develops quickly into a serious relationship:** Within weeks of meeting Poppy, John and Poppy were an item. Despite the fact that they carried on their relationship in the first year as a long distant one, it became serious quickly. When Poppy finished her master’s degree, she moved to be with him in Leeds, away from her family and friends. They live together before embarking on a travelling adventure together. They discuss commitment and buying a property together.
 - **Stage 3. The relationship becomes dominated by coercive control:** It is unknown, to what extent there were controlling behaviours displayed, as they are often subtle and unrecognised. However, several of Poppy’s friends discuss John’s controlling behaviour, his apparent possessiveness, his behaviour which was deemed by a number of her friends as ‘sulking’ and John’s propensity to insecurity and need to give him her undivided attention. Although it is unknown to what extent there were controlling behaviours, considering the full information being set out in this report, it can be concluded that the relationship demonstrated coercive control throughout, and additionally post separation.
 - **Stage 4. A trigger threatens the perpetrator's control - for example, the relationship ends, or the perpetrator gets into financial difficulty:** A number of triggers occur. Poppy tries to finish the relationship at least once (May 2018). She decides not to buy a property with John. When she finally terminates the relationship

(September 2018), John is distressed and continues to try to persuade her to stay. John faces losing Poppy and his apartment and therefore his security. Poppy then commences another relationship.

- **Stage 5. Escalation - an increase in the intensity or frequency of the partner's control tactics, such as stalking or threatening suicide:** On at least one occasion, he cries openly in the pub. Poppy describes a number of examples of them arguing, at least one event when he either follows her or tracks her. Poppy considered he must have tracking equipment on her phone or be following her when he turned up unannounced on the night he attacked Tony. John somehow seems aware of Poppy staying at Tony's home when Poppy had told him she had remained at their apartment. John provides conflicting accounts to people about how he is 'coping', variously presenting as ok, then emotional, then aggressive but is described by Poppy as a Jekyll and Hyde character. This, along with the selfie on their travels, indicates that John was very controlling, but Poppy couldn't comprehend that, and no-one else had the full picture, just isolated incidents.
- **Stage 6. The perpetrator has a change in thinking - choosing to move on, either through revenge or by homicide:** John repeatedly tells people that it is not his choice to separate and that he is sad/upset. Although he starts to see another young woman-Tara, he is annoyed by what he sees as Poppy's lack of respect towards him. He discloses his frustrations to friends and in a specific email exchange with a friend in Australia.
- **Stage 7. Planning - the perpetrator might buy weapons or seek opportunities to get the victim alone:** As cohabitees, still sharing the same apartment, it was the perfect environment for John to take control. He had Poppy alone at home. Despite repeated denials in his police interviews, John finally acknowledged that he entered her room armed with a knife before he attacked her. This shows his intent.
- **Stage 8. Homicide - the perpetrator kills his or her partner and possibly hurts others such as the victim's children:** John then killed Poppy in a violent, unprovoked, and unsuspecting attack. He uses the phrase, 'nothing I could say to her could hurt her, so I have taken out my revenge physically'.

14.51 In her analysis of Intimate Partner Femicide (IPF), Monckton-Smith, looks specifically at Triggers. Stage Four of the homicide timeline is the progression to 'Triggers'. (*Monckton-Smith, Homicide Timeline – The 8 Stages, Violence Against Women Journal 2019*).

14.52 Triggers relate to the real, imagined, or just threatened reasons that men give when seeking to explain why they have killed their partners, and John's behaviour falls within this categorisation.

14.53 Poppy had packed and was ready to leave when she went to bed on the evening of 13.12.2018. Poppy was due to travel to London for the weekend (to visit friends) straight after work on the Friday afternoon on 14.12.2018. She was also due to move out of their joint accommodation on 17.12.2018 when she returned from London, before moving into her own apartment at the start of the following week. It was a time of heightened tension. Poppy was murdered in the early hours of 14.12.2018.

- 14.54 John used the language of revenge, of wanting to punish Poppy, when interviewed by RG. In his mind, he believed he was slighted by Poppy. He believed he had the right to inflict the fatal blows, and that he could hurt her for the hurt she had in his opinion, inflicted on him. Revenge implies a pre-planned action (stage 6 of the homicide timeline).
- 14.55 According to the Femicide Census of 2020, of the 888 women killed by partners during the period to which the census relates, 378 (43%) were known to have separated, or taken steps to separate from the offender. (*Femicide Census 2020*).
- 14.56 Of that number, 142 (38%) were killed within the first month of separation and 70% took place in the shared home of the victim and the perpetrator or the victim's home. (*Femicide Census 2020*)
- 14.57 Whilst their relationship had effectively ended, some weeks previously, Poppy had not yet moved out of their shared apartment, which renders the circumstances and context of her murder to be consistent with the information gathered within the 2020 Femicide Census.

15. Section 15 - Conclusions

- 15.1 The lack of agency information suggests that the murder of Poppy by John could not have reasonably been predicted or prevented by agencies. It is also extremely unlikely that any single family member or friend, could have predicted the likely escalation in John's behaviour.
- 15.2 Whilst he did not expressly state that he would cause her harm, John had pleaded with Poppy not to leave, was demonstrably emotionally unstable on occasion, had used violence connected to Poppy (the attack on Tony), had recklessly assaulted Poppy, and he used behaviours which could be considered obsessive and stalking. Just because a behaviour does not reach a criminal threshold to charge, does not limit the impact on a victim.
- 15.3 From the people spoken to by the initial Chair and Author, and followed up by the second Chair, there is a high degree of consensus that they were shocked and dismayed by the outcome of the relationship. Every person that knew them as a couple, from their respective families to their friends and work colleagues, saw them as a couple in a personal relationship that was not, in any way, indicative of an abusive or fractious relationship. We now know different. With the benefit of hindsight, the evidence (that John was a controlling individual), whilst subtle, was always there.
- 15.4 The subtle but obvious controlling behaviours highlighted in this report indicate that on reflection, there were warning signs that John was capable of unprovoked and spontaneous violence, and whilst he may not have met the criminal level threshold for charging, he can be regarded of being at least reckless in causing Poppy injury on at least 2 occasions. He had additionally 'intentionally' thrown her phone across the room, which is itself evidence of a lack of control and a propensity towards violence.
- 15.5 To many of the witnesses, it appeared that John was coping with the imminent loss of his relationship. However, there were some isolated incidents where he talked about his upset,

was visibly distressed and he talked about his dislike for Tony before Poppy, and he became romantically involved. This indicated he was not coping. He had emailed his frustrations about his perceived 'disrespect' to his [REDACTED] friend.

- 15.6 Whilst there was no suggestion that Poppy felt unsafe, she also may not have recognised warning signs. She potentially did not know that she was at risk. Indeed, because their relationship did not involve consistent periods of physically abusive behaviour, Poppy's ability to identify individual incidents may have been limited. Poppy was a young woman, in her first serious relationship. This means she may have had very little to compare her relationship with. Life experience and that of your friends and contemporaries are shared through discussion and Poppy's family and friends all agreed that she was a private individual, not prone to discussing personal matters.
- 15.7 It is now clear that the ending of the relationship was a period of heightened risk to Poppy and proved to be the catalyst, or possible trigger, for John's fatal attack upon her. In the hours before she was murdered, Poppy was alone at home and had been innocently messaging on her phone before she went to bed. John later entered her room, and whilst what happened there is unknown to anyone but he, John accepted finally that he entered the bedroom armed with the knife. His language is chilling and demonstrates intent. He stated, *'Nothing I could say to her could hurt her, so I have taken out my revenge physically.'*
- 15.8 There are some limitations of the research in terms of its reliability in determining what men may pose a risk to the wellbeing of women. As research grows, the awareness of the time when an offender poses a risk will inform the debate about risky and dangerous behaviours. Whilst the men that kill women may often demonstrate particular behaviours before doing so, it must be recognised that that is not always the case. John did not present significant behaviour, but he did present some.
- 15.9 John was found to be wholly inconsistent in his accounts, he lied continuously and attempted to present himself in a 'victim-like state' which demonstrates that he was manipulative to the end. This included not being open about his developing relationship with Tara, meeting her parents and staying over at each other's homes, in order to control the narrative as him being the 'victim' of others. He lied about the assault, the ferocity and violence, his actions at the scene and after the event. He sought to cover up his actions. He sought to blame Poppy- a wholly innocent and defenceless young woman. The biology and forensic accounts disproved his account.
- 15.10 The information now considered showed that there were definite warning signs- albeit nuanced, veiled and sporadic, about his predisposition to this horrendous crime. Whilst this does not mean the events could have been prevented, there is now information which supports the growing narrative on coercive and controlling behaviours. This will be part of Poppy's legacy.
- 15.11 The narrative around Poppy's murder does present learning for all agencies and services in terms of reinforcing current knowledge of how domestic abuse occurs and the usefulness of using the 8 stages of domestic homicide timeline to inform their assessments and advice.

- 15.12 Many practitioners working across services, engage with men and women who move in and out of relationships and thus have the ability to pick up on concerning behaviours and take appropriate action.
- 15.13 Learning from the review highlights the importance of routine enquiry and the need for practitioners to be alert to the sometimes-subtle signs that individuals pose an increasing risk of harm to partners/ex-partners, or that they are indeed already causing harm.
- 15.14 In particular the review highlights the importance of picking up on behavioural cues and emotional warning signs. These could take the form of emotional instability, evidence of a refusal to accept the end of the relationship, evidence of self-worth being too connected with the maintenance of the relationship, seemingly isolated instances of violence, and stalking type behaviours.
- 15.15 Framing the observation of any concerns within the 8-stages timeline can support the practitioner in understanding what they have observed and what other enquiry they might need to make. The narrative also supports our understanding of domestic abuse and domestic homicide as events that can be perpetrated by individuals from all walks of life and that victims can also come from all walks of life. Stereotyping should not blind practitioners to risk where there is evidence that it exists.

16. Learning

- 16.1 In retrospect, there were clear themes in Poppy's case which practitioners have now identified learning concerning the assessment of risk, additional risks of stalking behaviour and risks at points of separation. The behaviours which Poppy experienced were not obvious or understood by friends or families, and not evident to any agency involved in this review.
- 16.2 Practitioners (then and now), where they have had involvement, identified and apply the 8 stages model to those risks. In response to research and academic developments concerning domestic homicides, the partnership has reviewed the learning offer, reinforced, and developed the learning office to ensure this is addressed in single and multi-agency training, and continues to do so through its workforce.

17. Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

The ICB Safeguarding Business Unit should add to their Annual Audit Plan (for 2023) a dip sample audit of Primary Care's understanding and use of routine enquiry and implement that plan.

Note: Recommendation added to the CSP Action Plan.

Recommendation 2. (National and to be included in HO action Plan)

Explore awareness raising and deliver a public / employer / education (including secondary or University education) focussed campaign on the risks that may be present during the period leading up to and including separation in a relationship.

Appendix 1; Websites, Policy, and Guidance documents

Additional websites, policies and initiatives have also been used as reference documents whilst examining the facts of this case.

HM Government strategy for Ending Violence against Women and Girls 2016-2020

Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews published by the Home Office December 2016

Domestic Homicide Reviews: Key Findings from analysis of domestic homicide reviews published by Home Office December 2016

Leeds Council web site

West Yorkshire Police website (Specifically) domestic abuse policies can be accessed by members of the public on the West Yorkshire Police website at:

https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/sites/default/files/2019-10/domestic_abuse.pdf

https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/sites/default/files/2019-10/domestic_violence_disclosure_scheme.pdf

https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/sites/default/files/2019-10/domestic_violence_protection_notices_and_orders.pdf

The Force publishes a range of guidance and advice to members of the public in respect of domestic abuse which can be accessed on the Force website at:

<https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/advice/349>

The site also has links to a range of additional relevant policies, for example stalking and harassment, at:

<https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/about-us/policies-and-procedures/policies>

Appendix 2 - Terms of Reference



DHR Q – Summary of Approach and Draft Terms of Reference

Introduction

This Domestic Homicide Review has been commissioned by Safer Leeds in response to the death of Poppy DEVEY WATERHOUSE on 14.12.2018 in accordance with the requirements of Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004).

Members of Safer Leeds agreed to the formation of a Panel to undertake this review and following an open tender process appointed Ray Galloway as the Independent Chair and Author.

Ray is not employed by any of the statutory agencies involved in the Review as identified in section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) and as such is independent.

Purpose of the Domestic Homicide Review

The purpose of the DHR will be to:

- Establish what lessons can be learned from the domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations worked individually and together to safeguard the individuals who are the subjects of the review.
- Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result.
- Apply the lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate.
- Contribute to the prevention of domestic violence and abuse homicides in the future, by using relevant findings to improve service responses for all subjects of domestic violence and abuse and their children through improved intra and inter-agency working.

The over-arching aim of this DHR is to increase safety for those who may experience potential and actual incidents of domestic abuse by learning lessons from the death in order to change future practice. It will be conducted in an open and consultative fashion bearing in mind the need to retain confidentiality and not apportion blame. Agencies will seek to discover what they could do differently in the future and how they can work more effectively with other partners and take action to make necessary changes.

The Panel will request and review Individual Management Reviews (IMRs) from each of the relevant agencies defined in Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004), and invite responses from any other relevant agencies or individuals identified through the process of the review.

The Panel will seek the involvement of family members, employers, colleagues, neighbours, and friends to ensure that a robust analysis takes place of the full circumstances surrounding the incident under review.

The DHR will consider the intervention and contacts between agencies and the individuals who are the subjects of the review in the two-year period prior to and including the date of the incident on 14 December 2018. If in the course of the DHRs inquiries matters of relevance are identified that occurred outside that two-year period, these will be included.

Principles of the Review

The DHR will be undertaken in accordance with the current national DHR Guidance, most recently updated in December 2016. It will be guided by seven principles:

- The DHR will be objective, independent & evidence based.
- The DHR will be guided by humanity, compassion, and empathy, with the subjects of the review at the heart of the process.
- The DHR will ask questions, identify issues, and make recommendations that seek to reduce or prevent future harm and learn lessons.
- The DHR will not blame individuals or organisations, but if the evidence supports it, will seek to ensure that organisations are held to account for actions or the lack of.
- The DHR will respect equality and diversity, giving due accord to the nine protected characteristics.
- The DHR will be conducted in an open and transparent way whilst safeguarding confidential information.
- The DHR will culminate in an Overview Report and Action Plan to effect change and disseminate lessons learned.

Terms of Reference

1. Examine the events leading up to the fatal incident, including a chronology of the events in question.
2. Review the interventions, care, and treatment and or support provided. Consider whether the work undertaken by services in this case was consistent with each organisation's professional standards and domestic abuse policy, procedures and protocols including Safeguarding Adults.
3. Review the communication between agencies, services, friends, and family including the transfer of relevant information to inform risk assessment and management and the care and service delivery of all the agencies involved.

4. Identify any care or service delivery issues, alongside factors that might have contributed to the incident.
5. Examine how organisations adhered to their own local policies and procedures and ensure adherence to national good practice.
6. Review documentation and recording of key information, including assessments, risk assessments, care plans and management plans.
7. Examine whether services and agencies ensured the welfare of any adults at risk, whether services took account of the wishes and views of members of the family in decision making and how this was done and if thresholds for intervention were appropriately set and correctly applied in this case.
8. Whether practices by all agencies were sensitive to the gender, age, disability, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of both the individuals who are subjects of the review and whether any additional needs on the part of either were explored, shared appropriately, and recorded.
9. Whether organisations were subject to organisational change and if so, did it have any impact over the period covered by the DHR. Had it been communicated well enough between partners and whether that impacted in any way on partnership agencies' ability to respond effectively?

Family involvement and Confidentiality

The DHR will seek to involve the family of both the individuals who are subjects of the review, taking account of who the family wish to have involved as lead members and to identify other people they think relevant to the review process.

The DHR will seek consent of relevant family members to be named parties in the review (and will inform them of our intention to secure information from their records.)

The DHR will seek to agree a communication strategy that keeps the families informed, if they so wish, throughout the process. It will be sensitive to their wishes, their need for support and any existing arrangements that are in place to do this.

Involvement with the perpetrator

The perpetrator, 'John' was convicted of murder at Leeds Crown Court and sentenced to life with a minimum term of 16 years on 12 April 2019. Safer Leeds will seek to contact 'John' to advise him of the process of the DHR and establish whether or not he wishes to contribute to the review. If he does, appropriate arrangements will be made for the Chair to meet with him.

Disclosure & Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained by organisations whilst undertaking their IMRs. However, the achievement of confidentiality and transparency must be balanced against the legal requirements surrounding disclosure.

The independent chair, on receipt of an IMR, may wish to review an organisation's case records and internal reports personally, or meet with review participants.

Any lessons learned will be taken forward immediately and not wait for the completion and publication of the Overview Report.

Individuals will be granted anonymity within the Overview Report and Executive Summary and will be referred to by a pseudonym or by initials.

Where consent to share information is not forthcoming, agencies should consider whether the information can be disclosed in the public interest.

Timescale for completion of the Review

It is anticipated that a final Overview Report will be completed by November 2020. This will be subject to a number of factors including:

- The time taken for the production of Individual Management Reviews
- Sensitivity to the concerns and wishes of family members.
- The need to avoid compromising other formal activity, such as criminal proceedings or those involving the Coroner.
- The possibility for identifying matters which may have the potential to expand the scope of the DHR.

If during the review, it seems likely that the November 2020 timescale needs to be extended, this will be agreed by the Chair with Safer Leeds and communicated to the Home Office.