# Be Safe-Bolton Strategic Partnership

# Domestic Homicide Review (DHR)

## Concerning, 'Andrew', who died in January 2019

**Independent Review Chair and Author: Paul Sharkey**

**28 July 2023**

**CONTENTS PAGE**

## Preface

The Bolton Be Safe Strategic Partnership wishes at the outset to express it's deepest sympathy to the family of Andrew[1].

His family chose not to be involved in the review and their decision is fully respected and acknowledged by the review panel and the Independent Chair.

This review has been undertaken to learn lessons in order to improve the overall response to domestic abuse and enable partner agencies to better protect others in the future. The panel and chair have sought to conduct this review in a spirit of enquiry and non-blame. Thanks are expressed to the agencies and professionals who have taken part in this review.

The Domestic Homicide Review was commissioned by the Bolton Be Safe Strategic Partnership on 7th May 2019, having been deemed to have meet the criteria for a review by the core screening panel, under the guidance issued in accordance with section 9 (3) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victim's Act 2004.

[1] Not his real name; for reasons of confidentiality all names in this report are pseudonyms. These were chosen at Random by the independent author. Andrew's family did not want to take part in the DHR and so were not consulted on names. 'Gemma', was offered a choice of 2 suggested name or to choose her own name. She chose the name, 'Gemma'.

## Section 1

## 1. Introduction and Background to the Review

**1.1** This report of a Domestic Homicide Review (henceforth referred to as the review) examines agency responses and support given to Andrew; a resident of Bolton, prior to his death in January 2019.

**1.2** In addition to agency involvement, which was in fact minimal, the review will also examine the past to identify any relevant background or trail of abuse before the death; whether support was accessed within the community and whether there were any barriers to accessing support. By taking a holistic approach the review seeks to identify appropriate solutions to make the future safer.

**1.3** This review concerns the tragic death of Andrew, a forty-nine-year-old male at the time of his death, and the circumstances of his demise, within the context of possible domestic abuse and violence. Andrew sustained a single stab wound to his chest on a morning in December 2018 following a party at the home (address 2) which he shared with his partner, Gemma in the Bolton area. He was taken by ambulance to a local hospital and treated for his injury. He survived for thirteen days but died in hospital in January 2019. The pathology evidence subsequently established that the cause of death was from a stab wound to his heart.

**1.4** Andrew had, prior to his death, been in an eighteen-month relationship (from August 2017) with Gemma, a female in her thirties; albeit they had split up for two months between November 2017 and January 2018.

**1.5** Whilst in hospital Andrew told his four daughters (Patricia, Susan, Jane, Mary) that he could not remember the stabbing incident and was unable to give an account of how he had come by his wound. He was twice visited in the hospital by Greater Manchester Police officers prior to his death. He was groggy from his pain medication and stated that he had no recollection of what had happened, saying that his last memory was being at the party. Subsequently, two different narratives emerged accounting for the incident. Gemma told a police officer, on scene shortly after the incident when Andrew was fatally injured, that there had been an argument which had turned into an altercation. Andrew had allegedly gone into the kitchen and on his return was striking himself in the chest with a knife. According to Gemma, her partner's injury was self-inflicted. She was arrested that morning on suspicion of a section 18 wounding (wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm) on Andrew.

**1.6** Andrew's family (his parents, four adult daughters and brother, Bryan) challenged this narrative and asserted that he was highly unlikely to have stabbed himself. They formed the view that he had been stabbed by Gemma during the altercation and that she had killed him. The family told the subsequent Greater Manchester Police investigation that, in their view, the couple's relationship had been volatile, marked by a history of controlling and violent behaviour directed at Andrew from Gemma. In essence, this narrative characterised Andrew as the victim of domestic abuse, violence and controlling behaviour from his partner. This became the subsequent GMP investigative hypothesis that underpinned Gemma later being charged with the murder of Andrew.

**1.7** In furtherance of this narrative, the family and some of Andrew's acquaintances told the police of three incidents when Gemma had allegedly been violent. Two incidents occurred in late 2017 and the third on 30th December 2018.

**1.8** Despite the above alleged incidents and the death of Andrew, neither individual had a criminal history of any relevance regarding reported domestic abuse and violence, or any recent involvement with the police, or indeed, of any domestic abuse service. Apart from the occasional GP attendance

in 2018 by Andrew and Gemma, there had been no relevant involvement by either individual with any of the social care and health agencies.

**1.9** The ensuing police enquiry sought early investigative advice in March 2019 from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Following subsequent CPS advice, Gemma was re-arrested in September 2019 and interviewed. She said that Andrew had struggled with mental health issues and had previously threatened to kill himself. Gemma was charged with his murder on 7th May 2020 and spent the remaining time, prior to her trial in November 2020, on remand in custody. She was found Not Guilty in late November 2020 after a three-week trial.

**1.10** Independently of the criminal process the Bolton Be Safe Partnership decided to commission a Domestic Homicide Review on 7th May 2019. Bolton Be Safe Core Screening Panel determined that the circumstances of Andrew's death fitted the criteria for a Domestic Homicide Review under primary legislation[2] and under paragraph 18 of the Home Office guidance (2016). An independent Chair/Author was duly appointed, and the Review commenced shortly after. However, for various reasons, the Chair's involvement was ended on 17th June 2021 and a new independent joint Chair/Author was appointed in late July 2021. The first panel met on 16th November 2021 and signed off the report in August 2022. Approval was given by the Bolton Be Safe Partnership on the 12 September 2022.

**Key Persons**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1.11** | Andrew (deceased: | Subject of this Domestic Homicide Review |
| | Gemma: | Partner to Andrew (lived at address 2) |
| | Child 1: | Gemma's younger child |
| | Child 2: | Gemma's older child |
| | Bryan: | Andrew's brother |
| | Patricia, Susan, Jane, Mary: | Andrew's adult daughters |
| | Ian and Michael: | Andrew's friends at address 1 ( Andrew's house) |

## 2. Review: Purpose and Terms of Reference

### 2.1 Purpose

As per section 2, paragraph 7, Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews; a) to f). See appendix 1

### 2.2 Terms of Reference

1. Did Gemma perpetrate domestic abuse and violence[3], and/or coercive control on Andrew. Conversely, did Andrew perpetrate domestic abuse and violence, and/or coercive control on Gemma? If so, what was the nature and extent of domestic abuse and violence, coercion and control in the couple's relationship?

[2] Under section 9(3) of the Domestic Violence Crimes and Victims Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) and section 18 of the Home Office guidance. See appendix 1 of this report.
[3] Also known as intimate partner violence

2. If domestic abuse and violence, and/or coercive control was prevailing in the relationship, what was the self-awareness of Andrew and /or Gemma as a victim of domestic abuse and violence or coercion and control?

3. Why was there no agency intervention prior to the death of Andrew?

4. Were there any barriers to reporting domestic abuse and violence, and coercive control? Were there any barriers to the reporting of any concerns, held by the family and friends of Andrew, about domestic abuse and violence or coercion and control within the relationship between Andrew and his partner.

5. What evidence, if any, was there to suggest that Andrew manifested thoughts of suicidal ideation?

6. To what extent, if at all, did substance misuse by either or both partners have an impact on the relationship?

7. Are there any specific considerations around equality and diversity issues such as age, disability (including learning disabilities), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation that may require special consideration?

8. Is there sufficient local awareness of Domestic Abuse and Violence services for males and how to report it?

9. Is there sufficient service provision locally for male victims of domestic abuse and violence?

10. What support is available for anyone contemplating suicide and how easy is it to access?

## Scope

a. The timeframe is from August 2017 (the start of the couple's relationship) to January 2019; Andrew's death.

b. The DHR will not seek to establish who stabbed Andrew or any culpability issues. These were addressed by the trial.

c. The DHR will not seek to establish how Andrew died; this will be examined by any forthcoming Inquest, assuming one takes place.

d. Attempts will be made to include Andrew's family and friends and his partner in the DHR process.

## 3. Timescales

**3.1** See paragraph 1.10

## 4. Confidentiality

**4.1** The contents and findings of this review are confidential, with information being available only to participating officers/professionals and their line managers. It will remain confidential until approved for publication by the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel. Andrew and his partner, Gemma, have been anonymised to protect their identities, as have family, friends and professionals, in line with data protection and confidentiality regulations

## 5. Methodology

**5.1** The Bolton Be Safe Partnership commissioned this DHR on 7th May 2019.

**5.2** The DHR panel met on four occasions during the review. Terms of Reference, scope and key lines of enquiry were agreed at the first meeting (under the current chair) in November 2021. Andrew's family was encouraged to meet with the author, amongst other things, to contribute to the terms of reference; but signaled that they did not wish to take part in the process of the review.

**5.3** The review was informed by.

- Summary reports from the relevant agencies
- All relevant documentation from the Bolton Be Safe Core Screening Panel
- Police documents such as witness statements and mobile telephone scripts
- The Judge's summing up of Gemma's trial
- Government and Home Office strategy and policy documents on Violence Against Women and Girls and Supporting Male Victims of Domestic Abuse and violence.
- Discussions with friends Ian and Gemma
- The use of a 'critical friend' from the Mankind Initiative[4]
- Legal advice from the local authority solicitor (acting as legal advisor to the panel)

## 6. Involvement of Family, Friends, Work Colleagues, Neighbours and Wider Community

**6.1** The author was mindful of the need to involve the family and friends of Andrew and Gemma herself. Letters were sent to Andrew's parents and brother informing them of the decision to hold a DHR on the death of Andrew, what a DHR was, and a request from the Independent Chair/Author to contact them in order to ascertain whether they would like to have some involvement in the review. The letters followed previous contact between the family and the GMP family liaison officer (FLO) to prepare the way for their possible involvement in the DHR process. The family was provided with the Home Office DHR leaflet.

**6.2** The issue of advocacy for the family was considered at the beginning of the review, with the National Homicide Service being willing to provide this. This option was made clear to the family in communications to them.

**6.3** The family communicated to the Chair/Author that they did not wish to have any involvement with the DHR process, regarding the development of the terms of reference, inclusion of their views on agency involvement, advocacy or any other matter. It was left open to the family to contact the reviewer but to date, no contact has been made.

**6.4** The family's decision not to have any involvement in the DHR resulted in the review author being unable to hear and include their views and perspectives on significant events regarding Andrew and Gemma's relationship and time together, in this report.

**6.5** Contact was made with Ian, Andrew's friend, with whom he lived with prior to moving in with Gemma in May 2019. Ian very helpfully spoke with the author by telephone in line with his wishes. He did not want to meet directly with the author because he was fearful of the emotional impact of such a meeting. Ian's answers to several e-mailed questions were recorded by the author and then sent to Ian for his approval, which was forthcoming.

[4] The Mankind Initiative is a specialist charity in the UK focussing on male victims of domestic abuse

**6.6** Other friends and acquaintances of Andrew were written to and invited to meet or speak with the author, but no response was received.

**6.7** The author met with Gemma in April 2022 to discuss relevant issues with her. Following advice, the Independent Chair arranged advocacy for Gemma via the AAFDA organisation (Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse). The author met with Gemma in early July 2022 to share with her this report, and to gather her responses.

**Andrew-A portrait**

**6.8** According to the trial Judge's summing up, Andrew grew up in a suburb of Bolton along with his brother (Bryan) and parents. There were no other siblings. He had a good relationship with his brother, who described him as a private person not given to talking about his feelings. Others described him as easy going, close to his children and grandchildren, a happy person, houseproud and tidy. Gemma described him as 'bubbly and very energetic and would do anything for anyone'. A work colleague said he was always upbeat and very positive.

**6.9** Andrew was married and had three daughters, plus one stepdaughter from another relationship. The parents split up in 1999 but remained close, as Andrew did with his four daughters.

## 7. Contributors to the Review

**7.1** The following agencies provided summary reports[5];

- Greater Manchester Police
- NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care (Bolton Place) [6]
- Bolton at Home
- Fortalice[7]
- Endeavour[8]
- Bolton NHS Foundation Trust

## 8. The Review Panel Members

**8.1** The panel meet four times between November 2021 and May 2022 and consisted of the following representatives, all who were independent of line management oversight in this case.

| | |
|---|---|
| DS Alison Troisi | Greater Manchester Police Serious Case Review Unit |
| Dr (hc) Gill Smallwood | Chief Executive: Fortalice |
| Jill Caldwell | Chief Executive: Endeavour |
| Kaleel Khan | Head of Safeguarding Adults; NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care (Bolton Place) |
| Karen Allsop | Head of Support and Safeguarding; Bolton at Home |
| Dr Ayesha Ali | Greater Manchester Mental Health FT; Forensic Psychiatrist |
| Mark Brooks | The Mankind Initiative |
| Anisa Patel | Bolton Council Children's Social Care |

[5] IMRs were not required because of non or very minimal agency involvement with Andrew and Gemma prior to the former's death.
[6] Formerly, and at the time that the review was conducted, known as Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
[7] Fortalice Ltd is a third sector organisation based in Bolton providing frontline services for people who are, or have been, affected by DAV. See para 16.9.5 for further details.
[8] Endeavour is a local third sector agency that provides a range of medium to high DAV services for people and their pets. See para 16.9.6 for further details.

**8.2** The review and panel were supported by Mr.Tony Kenyon, DHR Coordinator with Bolton Council Community Safety Services. Ms. Marion Griffin from Bolton Council provided the administrative support. Ms. Angela Hunt (solicitor) of Bolton Council Legal Services, provided legal advice to the panel

## 9. Author of the Review

**9.1** Mr. Paul Sharkey was the joint Chair and Author of the DHR. He has over thirty years social work experience in multi-agency child/adult safeguarding and public protection services with the Leeds NSPCC and several large local authorities in West and South Yorkshire.

**9.2** He has a Master in Public Administration (MPA- equivalent to a public sector MBA) from the University of Warwick Business School (2007) and an M.A in Child Protection Law and Practice (1993) from the University of Keele. He obtained a certificate in strategic management from the Kennedy School of Government (Harvard University USA) in 2001.

**9.3** Mr. Sharkey has over twenty years' experience in writing and chairing numerous children's Serious Case Reviews (latterly Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews), Adult Safeguarding Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews. [9]

**9.4** He is independent of all agencies involved in this DHR and has had no previous involvement with any Bolton agency or the Community Safety Partnership (Bolton be Safe). He completed the Home Office online DHR training for independent chairs and authors in 2018.

## 10. Parallel Reviews

**10.1** The criminal trial concluded in late 2020 with a finding of Not Guilty of murder for Gemma.

**10.2** Regarding an Inquest, the review understands that, at the time of writing this report, in August 2022, the local Coroner has not yet decided whether to hold an Inquest.

**10.3** GMP undertook a Post Acquittal Review. This was made available to the author who included it's contents into this DHR.

## 11. Equality Issues

**11.1** Andrew was an abled bodied forty-nine-year-old male (at the time of his death) of white British background, whose first; and only language as far as is known, was English.

## 12. Dissemination

**12.1** The following individuals and organisations will receive copies of this report.

- Andrew's family, assuming they agree to any further contact
- Gemma
- Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership Board
- Bolton Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership
- Bolton Safeguarding Adults Partnership
- Bolton Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Office of the Mayor for Greater Manchester

[9] Over twenty-five reviews

- Domestic Abuse Commissioner
- All agencies contributing to this review

## Section 2

## 13. Background Information: The Facts

**13.1** At the time of the incident when Andrew was fatally wounded in late December 2018, he was living with Gemma and her children at the latter's home (address 2) in the Bolton area. Andrew had been divorced for several years but had four adult daughters with whom he was in regular contact, as he was with his own parents who lived locally. Prior to joining Gemma and her children in May 2018, Andrew had lived at a separate address (address 1) in the Bolton area. Gemma was also from the Bolton area and divorced with two children: Child 1 and Child 2. The couple had been in a relationship for some eighteen months before Andrew's death. Both adults were of White British background and of unknown religion.

**13.2** Andrew died in a local hospital in January 2019. The cause of death was a knife stab to the chest sustained in December 2018 at Gemma's home. Both of her children were in the house during the incident but did not witness it, albeit they did see the after effects. There were no safeguarding issues reported at the time and none since[10]. Gemma said that Andrew had stabbed himself during an altercation, however, his family maintained that it was highly unlikely that he had stabbed himself. In any event, Gemma was charged in May 2020 with her partner's murder and was subsequently found Not Guilty in late 2020.

**13.3** The manner and circumstances of Andrew's death are unascertained at the time of writing this report (July 2022). The author is currently unsure as to whether an Inquest into his death will take place.

## 14. Chronology

**14.1** There was minimal agency involvement with the couple during the time under examination. The following table sets out the key events in the couple's relationship and the eighteen months leading up to Andrew's death.

| | |
|---|---|
| August 2017 | Andrew and Gemma begin their relationship |
| November 2017 | (Incident 1); Andrew allegedly stabbed in the leg by Gemma. |
| November 2017 | (Incident 2); The couple split up following an altercation when Gemma assaulted Andrew and damaged his house (address 1). Friends (Ian and Michael) became aware from others and Andrew about the incident. |
| 27th January 2018 | The couple reconcile and resume their relationship |
| April 2018 | Gemma attends her GP for physical health problems |
| May 2018 | Andrew moves in with Gemma and her two children |
| June 2018 | Andrew consults his GP for sleep difficulties. |
| September 2018 | The couple take a holiday in Egypt and announce their marriage intentions |
| December 2018 | (Incident 3); Fatal wounding; Following a family party Andrew is taken to local hospital. Gemma gives her account of the incident to attending police officers. Gemma is arrested. |

[10] The children were removed from their mother's care and placed with a relative. They have since moved back to their mother's care with the agreement of Bolton Children's Social Care.

| | |
|---|---|
| Early January 2019 | Andrew tells his children and police officers he cannot remember what happened |
| 11th January 2019 | Andrew dies in hospital |
| 12th September 2019 | Gemma is re-arrested |
| 7th May 2020 | Gemma is charged with murder |
| Late 2020 | Gemma's Trial |
| Late 2020 | Not Guilty verdict |

## 15. Overview

15.1 There was no agency involvement with Andrew, his family or Gemma (within the relevant timeframe) prior to the incident of December 2018, save for routine GP and hospital contacts.

### Definition of Terms

**15.2** The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as,

"Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse" if

(a) A and B are each 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
(b) The behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following-

(a) physical or sexual abuse.
(b) Violent or threatening behaviour
(c) Controlling or coercive behaviour
(d) Economic abuse[11]
(e) Psychological, emotional or other abuse

And it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

**15.3** Controlling behaviour[12] 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".

**15.4** 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 victim". (Home Office, 2016, paragraph 15)

### Gender and Prevalence Issues

**15.5** This review recognises that domestic abuse, violence and coercive control are forms of inter-personal violence mostly inflicted on women and girls by men (Home Office; March 2022, page 11)[13].

[11] "Economic abuse", means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to -
(a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
(b) Obtain goods or services.
[12] See Home Office, 'Multi-agency statutory guidance for the conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews', 2016, paragraph 15.
[13] Home Office; March 2022; Violence Against Women and Girls Services; Commissioning Toolkit

'Abuse should also be understood as a cause and consequence of gender inequality, and as a result, it impacts disproportionately on women and girls.' (Home Office, March 2022, 7)

**15.6** It can impact at any stage of life on an individual's physical and mental health, damage to self-esteem, confidence, isolation, homelessness and reduces economic circumstance with varying degrees of harm, vulnerability and disadvantage. Over 27% of women had experienced domestic abuse since the age of 16 along with 14% of men. (Home Office; March 2022, 11)[14]

**15.7** However, even though it is beyond dispute that victims of domestic abuse, violence and coercive control are predominately female (women and girls) there is a solid body of evidence and research to indicate that men and boys also experience domestic abuse and violence (H.M. Government March 2022; Bates et al, 2019)

**15.8** The Office for National Statistics figures show every year that one in the three victims of domestic abuse are male, equating to 757,000 men (1.561m women)[15]. 6.1% of cases discussed at Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) held between April 2020 and May 2021 involved male victims (likely to be an underestimate) with the remainder being female (93.9%). Out of 362 domestic homicides reported between March 2018 and March 2020, 86 (24%) were men (H.M. Government, March 2022) with 76% being female. Of those male homicides, 33 were due to an (ex) partner, 28 of whom were female and 5 males. The remainder of the 86 were from family members.

**Government Policy and Key Documents Supporting Male (and Female) Victims**

**15.9** In recognition of the evidence of the male experience of domestic abuse and violence as victims, the Government has recently published (March 2022) its 'Supporting Male Victims' document (see note 9 below for the full reference). This sits alongside the 'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy 2021 (see also, Home Office, 'Violence Against Women and Girls-National Statement of Expectations', March 2022)[16] and the Domestic Abuse Plan 2022 which aims to support all victims/survivors, including men and boys.

## Section 3

## 16. Analysis

**16.1 <u>ToR 1</u>**<u>: Did Gemma perpetrate domestic abuse and violence, and/or coercive control on Andrew. Conversely, did Andrew perpetrate domestic abuse and violence, and/or coercive control on Gemma. If so, what was the nature and extent of domestic abuse and violence, coercion and control in the couple's relationship?</u>

**16.1.1** Neither Andrew or Gemma was known to the police or to any of the domestic abuse agencies in the eighteen months timeframe prior to the former's death. Regarding the extent or otherwise of domestic abuse and violence; coercion and control, which may have characterised the couple's relationship, there are three incidents that provide relevant material evidence emanating from the police investigation and subsequent trial.

**16.1.2** The first of these (incident 1) was said by Michael (Andrew's friend), to have happened sometime between November and mid-December 2017. Michael said in his police statement made

[14] H.M. Government, 'Supporting male victims of crimes considered violence against women and girls', March 2022.
[15] Taken from the 'Mankind Initiative website (statistics)
[16] This document complements the Home Office commissioning toolkit cited above at note 8)

in January 2019, that he had heard from a family member in mid-December 2017, that a domestic incident had occurred between the couple at Andrew's house (address 1). Michael had been told by the family member that Gemma had been aggressive and smashed up Andrew's house. His dog had also, allegedly, been kicked. He was also told that Gemma had been violent towards Andrew but did not say how, and that he had heard the same information from Andrew's friends.

**16.1.3** Michael had not witnessed the event or seen any injuries. He did, however, speak to Andrew in a public house between Christmas Day and New Year's Day 2017. Andrew, 'looked really down', and told Michael that the couple had had an argument and had split up. Andrew also told Michael about the trashing of the house and that Gemma had stabbed him. In this second incident Andrew had allegedly grabbed his left thigh with his hand but did not say what Gemma had used to inflict the injury or when and how it had happened. It is likely that the two incidents were separate (according to Ian, see below).

**16.1.4** The trial Judge ruled Michael's hearsay evidence as inadmissible, reasoning that whilst there was pathology evidence of a faint scar of indeterminate cause and age, and that the location of the scar might coincide with his evidence of what Andrew had described, the evidence that this was the result of an alleged stabbing was not reliable and therefore inadmissible. Therefore, none of Michael's evidence was heard in the trial.

**16.1.5** Another friend, Ian gave a police statement in March 2019 that he, Michael and Andrew had all lived together in Andrew's house (address 1) in 2017/18. Ian said that in early 2018 he had returned home to find signs of a disturbance. He had heard the couple arguing and shouting at each other, but they had stopped on realising that Ian was in the house.

**16.1.6** Two weeks later (i.e., in January 2018) Ian returned to the house in the late evening after work to find the front room in a state of disarray. He noticed that a mirror was crooked, and that ornaments and picture frames were out of place, with some missing their glass. There were shards of glass around the skirting board in the living room and the TV stand was offset. He had also noticed tiny smudges of blood on the doorframe which he had not seen before. He also saw blood droplets in the bathroom around the basin and taps, which he later cleaned up. Ian knocked on Andrew's door to see if he was alright. Andrew did not open the door but gave a muffled response.

**16.1.7** It should be noted that there would appear to be a discrepancy in the dates given for this incident described by Ian. As reported above, Ian's police statement suggests that the incident occurred in January 2018, however, the trial transcript at page 8 gives the date as, 'about November 2017', which accords with Michael's evidence in his police statement. Ian's evidence was deemed admissible by the trial judge and was given under oath. [17]

**16.1.8** The accounts to the police by two of Andrew's daughters, Jane and Mary, suggested that there had been an incident some time before Christmas 2017 when Gemma had admitted to having 'punched Andrew and kicked off because she was not happy about what she had found'. Gemma said that she was sorry and did not mean to do it and that Andrew was not talking to her at that point. Mary stated in court that the couple split up for about three months but got back together in early 2018. Jane referred in her police statement to an incident between October and December 2017 when Gemma allegedly assaulted Andrew and, 'smashed up', his home.

**16.1.9** Given the evidence of Michael and the daughters, the author would submit that Michael and Ian are describing the same incident, namely the altercation between the couple when Andrew was said to have been punched by Gemma and the house was damaged. Moreover, that it was more likely to have happened in November 2017 (according to the trial transcript) than January 2018.

[17] Ian told the review author that he could not remember the exact date of the incident described in paragraph 16.1.6. He said it happened sometime between November 2017 and January 2018.

**16.1.10** In any event, Ian saw Andrew two or three nights later and described in court of his 'looking as if he (Andrew) had gone 10 rounds with Mike Tyson'. [18] Ian said that Andrew looked a mess, had two black eyes, burst lips, and scratches all over his face and arms. Ian asked what had happened and said that Andrew broke down whilst telling him the story. Ian said that Andrew had told him that he had tried breaking the relationship off with Gemma but that she had 'gone mental' and had started attacking him with anything she could get her hands on. Andrew reportedly used the phrase,' kicking seven bells of crap out of him', to describe the incident which ended with Andrew managing to get Gemma out of the front door.

**16.1.11** Ian was challenged during cross examination that he had exaggerated the extent of Andrew's injuries, which he denied, saying that Andrew was a mess with very deep scratches. The jury was reminded by the Judge that Ian had not actually seen the incident itself and was relating what he was told about it from Andrew, in short, that Ian's evidence was hearsay. Nonetheless, his evidence was admitted. [19]

**16.1.12** Gemma's account to the police and testimony in Court stated that Andrew had wanted to split up with her in November 2017. She said that Andrew had told her he wanted to end the relationship, that he wanted to be on his own, and that it was too much for him being with her children. Gemma said that she was very upset and heartbroken by this news. She admitted to having slapped him across the face and claiming to having been pushed out of the house by him, but denied assaulting him beyond that. She said that she was jealous, which had caused the argument but did not think that her slap could have caused the black eye or other injuries as described by Ian.

**16.1.13** This narrative accords with Gemma's account given to the review author at the visit on the 19 April 2022.[20] On this occasion, Gemma said that Andrew had,' told her out of the blue', that he had decided to end their relationship. Gemma said she was very upset with this development as she had had no warning from him. She acknowledged slapping Andrew around the face, not in anger, but as an immediate emotional response to him wanting to end the relationship suddenly and without any warning. She had spent about ten minutes in the house before being pushed out of the door by Andrew and rejoining her friend, who was waiting in a car outside of the house.

**16.1.14** Gemma told the author that she had not damaged Andrew's house nor left him with cuts and bruises on his face, as stated by Ian. She also strongly denied stabbing Andrew and had never noticed a stab scar. She said that this issue had been looked into at her trial with no evidence of her being responsible. [21]

**16.1.15** According to the Judge's summing up, Gemma had told Andrew's brother (Bryan) and one of his daughters (Mary) that Andrew had tried to break off the relationship, and that she (Gemma) had slapped him across the face. The daughter's recollection in the trial was that Gemma had told her she had punched Andrew. His mother gave evidence in the trial that Gemma had told her, "that she would not raise her hand against her son again". [22] Both accounts were ruled by the trial judge as admissible.

## Coercive control

**16.1.16** In discussion with the author, Ian said that, at first, the couple's relationship was,' nice and bonny…but as it went on, she (Gemma) became more controlling. For example, she would say that

[18] Quoted from page 17 of the judge's summing up.
[19] GMP subsequently filed the crime pending any further information coming to light.
[20] Further confirmed at a meeting with the author on the 11.07.22
[21] Gemma's comment should be seen in the context of the trial judge's decision not to admit this point in the trial, see paragraph 16.1.4 above.
[22] At page 18 (D)

they were going shopping or decide what they watched on television, and he had to put up with it; she would put her foot down'. In his police statement, Ian said that Andrew had moved out of address 1 and into Gemma's house (address 2 in May 2018). 'It was from then we did not see much of Andrew. I heard Gemma had become quite controlling and been telling Andrew that he did not need to see people'.

**16.1.17** Michael warned Andrew not to go back to Gemma after hearing about the alleged stabbing of late 2017. He told Andrew to, 'think yourself lucky you've had a lucky escape. If she can stab you once, she can (expletive deleted) stab you again. Do not go back with her'. On hearing that the couple had got back together in late January 2018, Michael thought that 'Andrew was an idiot for doing that, but it was his choice'. Michael saw the couple at family functions and parties in 2018 and noticed that Andrew 'seemed a bit more subdued than what he was like before. He was still bubbly and happy but not as much as before'. (All quotes taken from Michael's police witness statement at page 2)

**16.1.18** The narrative of Andrew's friends suggested therefore that, as the relationship developed, Andrew appeared to become more isolated from his family and friends, especially after he moved in with Gemma and her children in May 2018. According to them, Gemma appeared to be insisting that Andrew should spend more time with her than with his family and friends. However, Gemma provided a different narrative in a meeting with the review author on the 11 July 2022. She denied that she had been controlling of Andrew. She said that he had moved into her house by mutual agreement and of his own volition. She said that she did not make it difficult for Andrew to maintain contact with his family and friends and that there were several occasions when the couple took part in family functions, including Andrew's family being at the (ill fated) December 2018 family party.

**16.1.19** The couple remained apart over Christmas 2017 and did not come back together again until late January 2018.[23] Gemma was said to have been, 'over the moon', about the reconciliation. Both had had short relationships with others during this time which were the cause of considerable friction between them after the resumption of the relationship.

***Discussion***

**16.1.20** *The above accounts from Michael, Ian and relatives of Andrew suggest that the allegations of stabbing and the altercation at Andrew's house were two separate episodes, both of which occurred in late 2017 (possibly October/November). On balance, there is insufficient evidence (as per paragraph 16.1.4 above) to substantiate the allegation that Andrew was stabbed by Gemma.*

**16.1.21** *However, the evidence suggests that Andrew was struck by Gemma in the November altercation in Andrew's house (Incident 2). She acknowledged to the review author of slapping Andrew around the face, not so much in anger, but as an immediate emotional response to him wanting to end the relationship suddenly and without any warning. There was no evidence of any further abuse or violence between the couple prior to Incident 3, the night of the family party on the 30 December 2018. There was negligible evidence to suggest that Andrew was violent towards Gemma, save in ejecting her from his house during incident 2 in November 2017.*

***16.1.21*** *Therefore, by the legal definition of domestic abuse (see paragraph 15.2 above) it can be concluded that Andrew, on the occasion of incident 2, (November 2017 at his house) was subjected to domestic abuse (physical) from Gemma.*

***16.1.22*** *The evidence (set against the legal definition of 'coercive control' as cited in paragraph 15.2 above) from paragraphs 16.1.14/16, suggests that the couple's relationship was not*

[23] According to the judge's summing up document at page 21(G)

*characterised by coercive control by Gemma of Andrew. There was no evidence to indicate that Gemma experienced coercive control from Andrew.*

**16.1.23** The third incident concerned the altercation between the couple and Andrew's stabbing in the early hours of 30th December 2018. [24]Following a family party at Gemma's home, an argument broke out between them over Andrew's smoking at the party, after he was supposed to have given up. On hearing the noise, Child 2 came downstairs to ask them to stop arguing and was told that things were fine and to go back to bed. Gemma told the police that the argument escalated to both individuals grabbing each other, with her throwing a Christmas tree and food across the room. She said that Andrew pushed her down on the sofa and grabbed her throat and arm. She had grabbed his face. Andrew went to the kitchen and came back into the living room and started hitting himself in the chest. Gemma stated that she did not realise that he was stabbing himself. He then turned and walked away from the room and Gemma grabbed him to stop him leaving the house. It was only at this point that she felt 'wet', with his blood and shouted to him that he had stabbed himself.

**16.1.24** Hearing the altercation, Child 2 came downstairs again, this time to see Gemma 'bear hugging', Andrew; trying to stop him leaving and dragging him back to the house. Gemma moved away from Andrew and looked at her hands covered in blood, exclaiming that, 'he's stabbed himself'. Child 2 said they saw Andrew holding what looked like a knife. He walked away from the house and eventually collapsed in the street.

**16.1.25** An ambulance was called and Andrew was treated by paramedics for a stab wound and taken to a local hospital. Police officers attended the scene and questioned Gemma who said that Andrew had stabbed himself during the altercation. Whilst in hospital, Andrew told his daughters that he could not remember what had happened during the incident; even if he could, he would not tell the police that Gemma had allegedly stabbed him, as she would go to prison and she needed to look after her children. He told his daughters that he could not remember stabbing himself nor being stabbed by Gemma.

***Discussion***

**16.1.26** The evidence from this episode suggests that there was a significant altercation between the couple.

**16.1.27** An additional source of evidence used in the trial was an examination of the couple's mobile phone communications. *An analysis of this strongly suggested that their relationship was volatile, insecure and verbally abusive*.

**16.1.28** It was noteworthy that, even after the couple's reconciliation in late January 2018, it was reported in the trial and from mobile phone transcripts that there remained considerable friction within their relationship. This was in part because of mutual perceptions of ongoing infidelity from previous short-term relationships with others during the separation.

**16.2 ToR 2**: If domestic abuse and violence, and/or coercive control was prevailing in the relationship, what was the self-awareness of Andrew and /or Gemma as a victim of domestic abuse and violence or coercion and control?

**16.2.1** The review was given access to transcripts of conversations (SMS text messages) between the couple, which was adduced in evidence during Gemma's trial. The review Chair/Author and the panel member for Greater Manchester Mental Health Foundation Trust (a consultant forensic

[24] According to GMP, no trace of cocaine was found in the house on the night of the incident, however, there was a suggestion from a witness that Gemma had gone upstairs with someone and on returning downstairs was seen to have traces of white powder on her nose.

psychiatrist) reviewed the transcripts and the text messaging. These items, together with the documentary evidence, appear to suggest that neither individual had an understanding and/or self-awareness of being a victim of domestic abuse, violence and/or coercive control. The instances of verbal and physical (and possibly emotional) abuse seemed to be perceived as part of the volatile (up and down), warp and weft nature of the relationship.

**16.2.2** Of note is that Ian told the author that he 'never got the impression that either of them thought they were in a controlling or abusive relationship. Even if Andrew did think that he would not have said anything or told anyone. He was a very proud man.'

**16.3 ToR 3:** Why was there no agency intervention prior to the stabbing of Andrew?

**16.3.1** There was very limited agency involvement with the couple prior to Andrew's stabbing. He was seen by his GP on 6th June 2018 for trouble in sleeping and was managing on only three hours sleep per night. He said that he was not stressed and that the limited sleep was not affecting his day-to-day work in engineering, which he enjoyed. He disclosed a twenty five year history of cannabis use, which he had reportedly stopped one month previously, however, he declined a referral to the Bolton drug and alcohol service (BIDAS at the time). No low mood was noted. Andrew confirmed that everything was great at home. He engaged well in the consultation, was alert, with good eye contact and insight and said there were no issues with alcohol. He said that he had a great relationship with his partner and was looking forward to a forthcoming holiday with her in Egypt.

**16.3.2** A report was received from ~~Bolton CCG~~ NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care [25](Bolton Place) which commented that, 'From the clinical notes of the stated consultation, enquiry has been made regarding mental health and the wider social context and home setting. This is a thorough consultation and well documented'.

**16.3.3** Ian said in his police statement and also told the author that Andrew was a very proud man, kept himself to himself, and was quite closed and private. It took him three days to tell Ian about the November 2017 incident (see paragraphs 16.1.5 to 16.1.10 above). He would have been too embarrassed to have gone to the police. Ian said that he warned Andrew of Gemma's (alleged) violence, but that Andrew said that he could look after himself. Ian, in discussion with the author, said that 'there was no chance that he (Andrew) would seek help from his GP or any of the domestic abuse services. He thought that the fewer people who knew about it the better. It would take a lot for him to have come forward'.

**16.3.4** Gemma visited her GP on 24th April 2018 for a physical health problem which indicated nothing of any significance or relevance to this DHR.

**16.4 ToR 4:** Were there any barriers to reporting domestic abuse and violence, and coercive control? Were there any barriers to the reporting of any concerns, held by the family and friends of Andrew about domestic abuse and violence or coercion and control within the relationship between the couple?

**16.4.1** The academic literature (Bates, 2019) suggests that men are less likely to seek help for health and crime reporting than women, especially if they are the victims of domestic abuse and violence. Male help seeking and the reporting of crime can be perceived by both men and the health/criminal justice agencies as a weakness.

*'Male gender roles dictate that men are self-reliant and stoic, men who identify with these dominant masculine narratives may view help-seeking as in contrast with these values, and in conflict with the message society gives them……. The underpinning narratives of masculinity have been seen in male*

[25] Formerly, and at the time that the review was conducted, known as Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

*victims' accounts along with shame and embarrassment at not meeting their gender role expectations'* (Bates,2019,6)

**16.4.2** Arguably therefore, there are strong social barriers constructed around prevailing narratives of masculinity that inhibit males reporting inter-personal violence (IPV) to the police, other public protection agencies, and health services (GPs, mental health services).

'*Friends and family are often the preferred choice of confidant and help-seeking option more generally and for IPV related support specifically… (and)…..makes the reactions of friends and family particularly important, and could indeed be the key whether men and women then go on to seek more formal sources of help'* (Bates,2019,20)

**16.4.3** Bates' research is congruent with some of the comments made by both Andrew and his friend, Ian, regarding not reporting or accessing police and domestic abuse services (see paragraphs 16.3.3 above).

**16.4.4** Her research also found that an additional barrier to males seeking help can be the attitude of the agencies to any approaches by male victims. If met by unsupportive and negative responses (typically suspicion, disbelief and a general lack of professional curiosity) from the police and health services, men will be less willing to seek help in the future. Thus, inappropriate and unhelpful service responses are significant barriers to men seeking help with domestic abuse and violence.

**16.4.5** This finding is useful in informing domestic abuse services who are considering their offer to male victims. However, it should be noted that this review found no evidence that any of the parties approached any of the agencies to seek help with domestic abuse and violence.

**16.5 ToR 5:** What evidence, if any, was there to suggest that Andrew manifested thoughts of suicidal ideation?

**16.5.1** A review of the text messages (see paragraph 16.2.1 above), undertaken by the panel forensic psychiatry expert, reported that no evidence of depression, suicidal intent or plans regarding Andrew could be found. None of his family or friends reported suicidal ideation. He was described by acquaintances (as per the trial Judge's summing up) as a private person, but also as easy going, close to his children and grandchildren, a happy person……..he was very popular, brilliant to be around, a happy and excitable person. A work colleague (at the trial) described Andrew as always upbeat and very positive.

**16.5.2** The messages showed that both parties (Andrew and Gemma) spoke about ending their lives but there was no direct plan or a link to depression. Such discussions appeared to be held in the context of arguments between the couple. Thoughts of suicide were not consistently held or shared by Andrew.

**16.6 ToR 6:** To what extent, if at all, did substance misuse by either or both partners have an impact on the relationship?

**16.6.1** Andrew and Gemma were regular users of cocaine, the latter since 18 years of age and the former also a cannabis user of some twenty five years. However, the panel forensic psychiatrist informed the review that,' It cannot be established if the couple's substance misuse in any way contributed to the incident.

**16.6.2** Regarding the impact of the prolonged use of cocaine, the review was informed by the panel forensic psychiatrist that cocaine is known to have effects on certain chemicals in the brain which can stimulate feelings of both pleasure and rage. Cocaine's effects on brain chemicals like serotonin and norepinephrine can cause feelings of paranoia, aggression and impair judgement. Taking large

doses of cocaine can even further increase the likelihood of erratic behaviour that can include violent outbursts. In addition, once the effects of the drug have worn off, some may also feel more agitated and have strong drug cravings. This state of high anxiety and agitation may lead a person to act in violent ways.

**16.6.3** Much of the violence linked with illicit drug use occurs within a home environment. Those dependent on drugs such as cocaine may often lash out at those closest to them, including children, siblings, room mates and intimate partners. Cocaine use also has strong associations with domestic abuse against intimate partners and can cause violent behaviour and place those who use the drug at higher risk of experiencing violence from a partner.

**16.6.4** Having a history of abuse or witnessing violence can also be a risk factor for hard drug use in later life. Cocaine and other drugs such as marijuana are often involved in situations of drug fueled sexual assault and violence.

**16.6.5** The experience of addiction itself can also have a devastating impact on a person's wellbeing. Substance abuse can have a severe impact on all areas of a person's life, including their interpersonal relationships and the ability to work. Addiction can cause individuals to feel out of control and stuck in a destructive cycle of drug use. Suicide is the leading cause of death amongst those with a substance abuse disorder (SUD) and those with concurring mental illness are at even greater risk.

**16.6.6** During Andrew's contact with his GP on 6th June 2018, when he shared that he was a long-term user of cocaine and cannabis, he was offered a referral to Bolton Drug and Alcohol Service. Engagement with that service may or may not have provided an opportunity to explore whether his cannabis use was affecting his relationship with Gemma. However, he declined the offer. The review panel found no evidence that either party engaged with substance misuse services. There were no other opportunities to make relevant referrals or sign-posting and no reason why any agency should have considered such a referral.

**16.6.7** The panel felt that there was not enough information to establish with any certainty that substance misuse contributed to the couple's volatile relationship. Therefore, it can only be concluded that there was a possibility that substance misuse by either or both partners had an impact on the relationship, albeit it was not possible to determine the level of the impact. [26]

**16.7 ToR 7**: Are there any specific considerations around equality and diversity issues such as age, disability (including learning disabilities), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation that may require special consideration?

**16.7.1** Regarding Andrew, there were no identified specific issues around the nine protected equality and diversity characteristics that impacted upon his situation, save that it seems that he was embarrassed to acknowledge being subjected to domestic abuse and not wanting to report this to the police or other domestic abuse agencies.

**16.7.2** In general terms, it is likely that male victims of DAV are under-represented in accessing DAV support services for the reasons given in section 16.4 above. It is also likely that LGBTQI+ and BAME[27] people are also under represented in the DAV service offer.

[26] N.B At the meeting between Gemma and the author on the 11.7.22, Gemma suggested that arguments between the couple were heightened by the use of cocaine and that arguments were rare in the absence of cocaine use.

[27] Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Life: Black and Minority Ethnic

**16.8 ToR 8:** Is there sufficient local awareness of Domestic Abuse and Violence services for males and how to report it?

**16.8.1** The evidence presented by the panel suggested that there was insufficient local professional and public awareness of DAV services for males and how to report it. The panel noted that previous publicity campaigns have not included messaging for male victims of domestic violence. Moreover, Bolton Council has not commissioned any services specifically for male victims of DAV.

**16.9 ToR 9:** Is there sufficient service provision locally for male victims of domestic abuse and violence?

**16.9.1** There is insufficient local provision for male (including LBQTI+ and BAME) victims of DAV. Given the barriers to reporting domestic abuse and violence for men there is likely to be a greater hidden number than those few reporting.

**16.9.2** The following local agencies provide some support services to male victims of DAV and coercive control.

**16.9.3** Bolton at Home[28] is Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accredited and has a specialist DAV victim support service that is offered to both female and male victims who are Bolton at Home tenants. The service is provided by a central team working on a floating basis across Bolton. All Bolton at Home staff complete mandatory domestic abuse and violence training. Where victims disclose DAV in community based Urban Care and Neighbourhood (UCAN) Centres, the staff have the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately and refer onto the specialist DAV team.

**16.9.4** The majority of victims are female, but the agency receives referrals on male victims (ten in the last 12 months) from other agencies and is not gender specific in this regard. This review was informed that male victims account for 6% of all service users which is likely to be a hidden cohort. The agency has links with the 'Mankind Initiative'[29] and has previously liaised with the agency regarding male victims.

**16.9.5** Fortalice Ltd is a third sector organisation based in Bolton providing frontline services for people who are, or have been, affected by DAV. It provides emergency refuge accommodation for women and children at medium to high risk of DAV. The agency manages the IRIS programme and receives referrals from local General Practitioners (GPs). Although the national programme is gender based predominantly towards women, Fortalice has adapted ('Boltonised') the gender-based model to ensure that a victim of any gender is included in the IRIS programme. The service has an increased number of male victims referred by GPs. The agency reports that there is scope (through the IRIS steering group) to amend the marketing material for IRIS to make it more inclusive.[30]

**16.9.6** Endeavour is a local third sector agency that provides a range of medium to high DAV services for people and their pets. It is non-gender specific and provides services for male and female victims over the age of sixteen. Some 6% of victims are male with many coming from the Evergreen Project.[31] Most of the Evergreen service users (70 in total with 56 women and 14 men) want support within their own home involving the setting up of a bespoke safety plan around their needs. The average age of an Evergreen service user is 69 years of which 20% are male. Male

[28] A third sector social landlord.
[29] A DAV third sector organisation that provides support for male victims of DAV.
[30] A DHR panel member raised the question of inclusivity by DAV agencies regarding same sex victims and similar issues around barriers to help seeking within the LGBTQI+ community. This issue will be considered in another ongoing Bolton DHR.
[31] This project was launched by Endeavour in October 2020 in response to an increasing number of people aged fifty-five and over accessing the service. More men and couples are seen through this project than any other initiative.

victims also access the Haven project (99 service users of which 86 are women (87%) and 13 men (13%) which supports people in dispersed properties[32] and those with complex drug and alcohol issues. Most of the referrals come from other agencies and only a few from self-referrals.

**16.9.7** This review notes the recent publication of three apposite policy documents, namely.

- HM Government: 'Supporting male victims of crimes considered violence against women and girls.'(March 2022)
- Home Office (1): 'Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)-National Statement of Expectations'; Guidance on commissioning services to support victims and survivors of violence against women and girls.
- Home Office (2): 'Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG); Commissioning Toolkit[33]

**16.9.8** These documents set out the Government's key strategic aims and objectives to address VAWG and domestic abuse. They aim to assist the development of local infrastructure that;

'raises awareness of VAWG; including violence towards men and boys, robustly pursues perpetrators, supports reporting by victims and survivors (including men and boys) and uses multi-agency approaches to understand and meet the needs of victims, survivors and family members to support a process of recovery and to achieve positive life outcomes' (Home Office 1, 3)

**16.9.9** The panel and review author would suggest that the Bolton Community Safety Partnership (Bolton Be Safe) [34]includes a consideration of the needs of Men and Boys in its wider VAGW strategy and commissioning approach to the development of accessible support services to people affected by violence. The panel and review author would suggest that, following on from this DHR, the Bolton Be Safe partnership undertake a needs assessment [35] of male victims of domestic abuse and violence. This should include; mapping existing provision, raising local awareness regarding domestic violence to this group, and ways to lower barriers to access services within a whole systems approach of local statutory and third sector agencies and professionals working together to address violence and domestic abuse to males. [36]

## 16.10 ToR

**10:** What support is available for anyone contemplating suicide and how easy is it to access?

16.10.1 Given that there was minimal evidence to show that Andrew was prone to suicidal ideation this question is no longer relevant.

[32] 'Dispersed Properties' is another term for temporary accommodation provided by the local authority. People placed in dispersed properties in Bolton due to domestic abuse are supported by the Haven Project. Attempts are made to obtain permanent housing for them.
[33] See also the Government's Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan (March 2022)
[34] To eventually include Statutory Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) as proposed in the Health and Care Bill. See also the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill that will place new duties on a range of agencies to work collaboratively to prepare a strategy for preventing and reducing serious violence. This could consider whether to include domestic abuse and violence towards people. (See VAWG Toolkit, (March 2022, page10)
[35] For undertaking a needs assessment see VAGW Toolkit (March 2022), pages 16-21.
[36] A whole systems approach would include, prevention, provision of services, prosecution and justice considerations, including ongoing support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and violence as per the VAWG toolkit (March 2022).

## Section 4:

## 17. Conclusions

**17.1** In relation to ToR 1

**17.1.1** Accounts of the two altercations between the couple in November 2017 and 30th December 2018, together with additional trial and mobile transcript evidence, suggest that the couple's relationship was intense, volatile, insecure, unstable and prone to bouts of verbal and physical abuse.

**17.1.2** The was insufficient evidence, on the balance of probabilities, to indicate that Andrew was stabbed by Gemma in late 2017.

**17.1.3** Andrew was struck in the face by Gemma during the November 2017 incident (2) at his house and can therefore be said (within the legal definition of domestic abuse) to have experienced domestic abuse by way of a physical assault. The incident occurred within the context of Andrew unexpectedly telling Gemma that he wanted to end the relationship. Gemma said that she acted not so much in anger but rather as an immediate emotional response to the situation.

**17.1.4** There was negligible evidence to show that Andrew was violent towards Gemma, save in ejecting her from his house during incident 2 in November 2017.

**17.1.5** It is noted that incident 2 occurred at a time of Andrew announcing unexpectedly, of his wish to end the relationship. It is well established that incidents of couple separation can heighten the risk of serious harm to the partner instigating the split.

**17.1.6** The evidence from incident 3 (the night of 30th December 2018) indicated that there was a significant altercation between the couple.

**17.1.7** Set against the legal definition, the evidence does not suggest that the couple's relationship was characterised by coercive control of Andrew by Gemma. There was no evidence to indicate that Gemma experienced coercive control from Andrew.

### 17.2 ToR 2

**17.2.1** The available evidence suggests that neither individual had an understanding and self-awareness of being a victim of domestic abuse, violence and/or coercive control. The instances of verbal and physical (and possibly emotional) abuse seemed to be perceived as part of the volatile nature of the relationship.

### 17.3 ToR 3

**17.3.1** Apart from the three contacts with universal health services, there was no involvement with second and third tier specialist health and public protection services such as mental health, substance misuse or police and domestic abuse and violence services.

**17.3.2** A possible reason may have been that the couple's understanding of their volatile relationship seemed not to have been seen by them as existing within mental health or interpersonal violence frames of reference. Both individuals appear not to have seen themselves as, 'victims' of domestic violence/abuse and coercive control, and thus, not to have defined their situations as needing health and public protection solutions. Therefore, neither individual choose to go to the police and other public protection agencies in relation to issues of interpersonal violence, nor sought a GP referral to appropriate support/helping agencies.

**17.3.3** There was no evidence that Andrew's friends recommended that he contact the police or an appropriate agency; nor that they contacted or looked for agencies themselves that could help Andrew.

### 17.4 ToR 4

**17.4.1** Male victims of DAV can encounter significant barriers to reporting and receiving support and help, due in part to existing societal beliefs around masculine narratives of male strength, stoicism, self-reliance, shame and embarrassment in seeking help. This includes a lack of recognition (including self-recognition) that men (including LGBTQI+ and BAME males) can be and are victims of domestic abuse and violence.

### 17.5 ToR 5

**17.5.1** There was minimal evidence to indicate that Andrew tried to kill himself, self-harmed or manifested suicidal ideation prior to the stabbing incident on 30th December 2018.

### 17.6 ToR 6

**17.6.1** There was not enough information to establish with any certainty that substance misuse contributed to the couple's volatile relationship. Therefore, it can only be concluded that there was a possibility that substance misuse by either or both partners had an impact on the relationship, albeit it was not possible to determine the level of the impact.

### 17.7 ToR 7

**17.7.1** There were no identified specific issues around the nine protected equality and diversity characteristics that impacted upon Andrew's situation, save, as a male, he was embarrassed to acknowledge being subjected to domestic abuse and not wanting to report this to the police or other domestic abuse agencies.

**17.7.2** It is likely that male victims of DAV are under-represented in accessing DAV support services for the reasons given in section 16.4 above. It is also likely that LGBTQI+ and BAME people are under-represented in the DAV service offer.

### 17.8 ToR 8

**17.8.1** There is insufficient local professional and public awareness of DAV services for males and how to report it.

### 17.9 ToR 9

**17.9.1** There is insufficient local service provision for male victims of DAV.

**17.9.2** There is a limited service offer, however, it is not well promoted, with limited data regarding the scale of the problem and numbers of males coming forward to the police, public protection, GPs, statutory health agencies and third sector organisations.

**17.9.3** The current low numbers of male victims (including LGBTQI+and BAME males) accessing services are unlikely to reflect the real need, which is presently unknown. There is a need to understand how services for male victims are promoted within communities so that the 'hidden victims can start to come forward and access support. The lived experiences of male victims also need to be explored. The gap in knowledge needs to be addressed to inform future multi-agency policy, practice, service design and referral pathways for male victims.

### 17.10 ToR 10

**17.10.1** This question is no longer relevant as there was minimal evidence to indicate that Andrew was prone to suicide ideation.

## 18. Key Lessons

**18.1** There are no lessons arising from ToRs 1,2, 3, 5, 6 and 7.

**18.2** Regarding ToRs 4, 8 and 9 appropriate actions need to be taken by the Bolton Be Safe partnership to.

- Increase local community and professional awareness of domestic abuse and violence towards males, including LGBTQI+and BAME males.
- Undertake a needs assessment[37] of service provision for male victims of domestic abuse and violence as part of its VAWG strategy and commissioning in line with HM Government and Home Office, 'Supporting male victims of crime considered violence against women and girls', and 'Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)', National Statement of Expectations and accompanying Toolkit.

## Section 5

## 19. Recommendations and Action Plan

**19.1** The Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership (via the Bolton Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership Board) should take steps to increase awareness across local communities of the domestic abuse and violence of males, including LGBTQI+ and BAME males.

**19.2** The Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership (via the Bolton Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership Board) should take steps to increase awareness by local professionals of the domestic abuse and violence of males, including LGBTQI+ and BAME males.

**19.3** The Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership, via the Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership Board, as part of the refresh of the Domestic Abuse and Violence Strategy, should undertake a review of the needs of male victims of DAV, including LGBTQI+ and BAME males. This should take account of the Safe Lives Whole System Review and the ongoing work within the Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence, to ensure they are supported as part of a whole system approach.

[37] In line with two significant pieces of work recently undertaken in Bolton, namely the Greater Manchester Male Victims Working Group and the Safe Lives Review (see appendix 2)

# Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership – Multi- Agency Action Plan

**Recommendation One**

**Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership (via the Bolton Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership Board) to take steps to increase awareness of the Domestic Abuse and Violence of males across local communities.**

| Key Actions | Evidence | Key Outcomes | Lead Officer |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.1** Bolton DAV Partnership Board to take account of the Safe Lives Whole System Review on DAV in Bolton and the local system assessment under the Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence.<br>**1.2** Bolton DAV Partnership Board to coordinate community communications activity and develop a new form of engagement.<br>**1.3** Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Strategy to be refreshed, taking into account this recommendation | Safe Lives Whole System Review on DAV in Bolton<br><br>Bolton system assessment on male victims (Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence)<br><br>Minutes from DAV Partnership Board Meetings<br><br>Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Strategy<br><br>Communications activities | Increased recognition and awareness of signs of Domestic Abuse and Violence to male victims within local communities.<br><br>More male victims encouraged to report Domestic Abuse and Violence<br><br>Reduce barriers for males to access DAV services | Head of Community Safety & Neighbourhoods, Bolton Council |

**Recommendation Two**

**Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership (via the Bolton Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership Board) to take steps to increase awareness of the Domestic Abuse and Violence of males within local professionals.**

| Key Actions | Evidence | Key Outcomes | Lead Officer |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2.1** Bolton DAV Partnership Board to take account of the Safe Lives Whole System Review on DAV in Bolton and the local system assessment under the Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence.<br>**2.2** Bolton DAV Partnership Board to coordinate awareness raising activities for professionals.<br>**2.3** Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Strategy to be refreshed, taking into account this recommendation | Safe Lives Whole System Review on DAV in Bolton<br><br>Bolton system assessment on male victims (Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence)<br><br>Minutes from DAV Partnership Board Meetings<br><br>Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Strategy<br><br>Communications activities | Increased recognition and awareness of signs of Domestic Abuse and Violence to male victims by professionals.<br><br>More male victims encouraged to report Domestic Abuse and Violence<br><br>Reduce barriers for males to access DAV services | Head of Community Safety & Neighbourhoods, Bolton Council |

**Recommendation Three**

**Be Safe Bolton Strategic Partnership, via the Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership Board, as part of the refresh of the Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Strategy, should undertake a review of the needs of male victims of DAV, taking account of the Safe Lives Whole System Review and the ongoing work within the Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence, to ensure male victims of DAV are supported as part of a whole system approach**

| Key Actions | Evidence | Key Outcomes | Lead Officer |
|---|---|---|---|
| **3.1** Bolton DAV Partnership Board to take account of the Safe Lives Whole System Review on DAV in Bolton and the local system assessment under the Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence.<br>**3.2** As referenced in the Safe Lives Whole System Review, Bolton DAV Partnership Board to clarify how the safe accommodation offer meets the needs of male victims within the Bolton Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022 - 2025<br>**3.3** MARAC steering group to track and monitor the percentage of male victim referrals, and to flag to the Domestic Abuse and Violence Partnership Board when and if this falls outside of the recommended range identified in the Safe Lives Whole System Review.<br>**3.4** Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Strategy to be refreshed, taking into account this recommendation | Safe Lives Whole System Review on DAV in Bolton<br><br>Bolton system assessment on male victims (Greater Manchester Working Group on male victims of domestic abuse and violence)<br><br>Minutes from DAV Partnership Board Meetings<br><br>Domestic Abuse and Violence Prevention Strategy<br><br>MARAC data.<br><br>Bolton Safe Accommodation Strategy 2022 - 2025 | Reduce barriers for males to access DAV services | Head of Community Safety & Neighbourhoods, Bolton Council |

## Section 6

## 20. Glossary

| | |
|---|---|
| AAFDA; | Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse |
| BAME; | Black and Minority Ethnic (people) |
| BIDAS; | Bolton Drug and Alcohol Service |
| CPS; | Crown Prosecution Service |
| DAV; | Domestic abuse and violence |
| DAHA; | Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance |
| DHR; | Domestic Homicide Review |
| FLO; | Family Liaison Officer (Police) |
| GMP; | Greater Manchester Police |
| GP; | General Practitioner |
| IPV; | Inter-personal violence |
| LGBTQI+; | Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer, and Inter-sex Life |
| MARAC; | Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference |
| NHS; | National Health Service |
| UCAN; | Urban Care and Neighbourhood Centre |
| VAWG; | Violence Against Women and Girls |

## Section 7

## 21. References


1. Bates E (2019); "No one would ever believe me", an exploration of the impact of intimate partner violence victimization on men; Psychology of Men and Masculinities; University of Cumbria; http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/4367/
2. Greater Manchester Male Victims Working Group
3. Griffiths R et al (March 2022); Safe Lives Review (Bolton)-'Bolton: Public Health Approach, MARAC Deep Dive and Review of the Local Response to Perpetrators'.
4. Home Office (December 2016); 'Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews'
5. Home Office (March 2022); 'Violence Against Women and Girls Services-Commissioning Toolkit'
6. HM Government; (March 2022); 'Supporting Male Victims of Crimes Considered Violence Against Women and Girls'.
7. HM Government (March 2022); 'Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan'

## Appendix 1

## The purpose of a Domestic Homicide Review

The purpose of a DHR is to:

a) establish what lessons are to be learned from the domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims.

b) 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.

c) apply these lessons to service responses including changes to inform national and local policies and procedures as appropriate.

d) prevent domestic violence and homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence and abuse victims and their children by developing a coordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that domestic abuse is identified and responded to effectively at the earliest opportunity.

e) contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic violence and abuse; and

f) highlight good practice.

## Appendix 2

### Greater Manchester Male Victims Working Group

Bolton is a member of the Greater Manchester Male Victims Working Group which was set up to meet the statutory duties under the new domestic abuse bill in ensuring a coordinated approach to supporting male domestic abuse victims across Greater Manchester. The work is being progressed in partnership with Greater Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Police, and other partners, including the Mankind Initiative

Local areas in the working group aim to encourage male victims to come forward, better recognition in both the public and professionals of signs of domestic abuse in male victims, ensuring all agencies work closer together and to improve quality and consistency of support.

As part of this work, Bolton is carrying out a whole system assessment of male domestic abuse support services, including mapping of services, volumes of male victims assessing services, victim referral routes, barriers in accessing domestic abuse services, safer accommodation arrangements, gaps in current male support provision, how best gaps can be addressed, and changes needed around current provision.

### Safe Lives Full Review

This review has recently been concluded in Bolton and represents a whole system assessment for all victims of domestic abuse, including male victims. Be Safe is currently planning the next steps in implementing all the recommendations of the review

Bolton's DAV Partnership Board would like to respond to the recommendations from the 'Andrew' Domestic Homicide Review within the broader context of both the Safe Lives review together with the local results of the assessment carried out under the GM Male Victims Group, by ensuring that the findings of the DHR are incorporated into the work that the DAV partnership is progressing and to form part of their strategy and action plan.

The current recommendation requires that the ‘whole system assessment’ should be in line with the three HM and Home Office documents cited in paragraph 18.3). The Home Office Documents referred to are 1) HM Government and Home Office, ‘Supporting male victims of crime considered violence against women and girls’, 2) ‘Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)’, 3) National Statement of Expectations and accompanying Toolkit.

Since the report was written, the government has now launched the Domestic Abuse Action Plan, and this is now considered to be the primary national policy document that areas need to work towards.