

**Overview report**  
**Huntingdonshire CSP**



**A Domestic Abuse Related Death Review  
(DARDR) concerning the death of Crystal  
(pseudonym)  
(July 2023)**

**Author – Jackie Dadd**

**Date completed – July 2024**

## Family tribute

A tribute to a shining star that was my sister.

Crystal was the youngest sibling born into our family, and in many ways, she was the sweetest surprise to us all. From the very moment she entered our lives, it was evident that Crystal was unlike anyone else - her unique looks, vibrant personality, and spirited demeanour set her apart. Despite not having the same privileges and opportunities as her peers, Crystal's unwavering determination for independence never faltered.

She thrived at school, earning popularity through her loyalty and dependability. These qualities were the cornerstones of her character, unwavering and resolute. Her compassionate nature knew no bounds; she was always ready to extend a helping hand, selflessly sacrificing for the betterment of those less fortunate.

As her sibling, I was blessed to have Crystal in my life. I could always rely on her unwavering support, her unyielding honesty, and her readiness to assist at a moment's notice. Despite facing numerous challenges along her journey, she remained resilient, bouncing back stronger with each setback. She refused to let disappointment define her, instead choosing to grow and evolve from every experience.

Losing Crystal feels like losing a dear friend, a cherished sister, but most importantly, it's like losing the companion I envisioned walking alongside me as we journeyed through life together. I hold onto the memories of her boundless love and compassion, and I will forever cherish the warmth of her smile, the sincerity of her words, and the depth of her love for me and our siblings.

Though she may no longer be with us physically, her spirit lives on in our hearts eternally. She has left an indelible mark on our lives, and we will carry her memory with us always.

Her Sister x

The Domestic Abuse Related Death Review Panel and the members of the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership would like to offer their sincere condolences to the family of Crystal, who have lost their loved one in tragic circumstances.

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## Preface

The key purpose of any Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR) is to examine agency responses and support given to a victim of domestic abuse prior to their death and to enable lessons to be learnt where there may be links with domestic abuse. For these lessons to be learnt as widely and thoroughly as possible, professionals need to be able to understand fully what happened in each death, and most importantly, what needs to change in order to reduce the risk of such tragedies happening in the future. The victim's death in this case met the criteria for conducting a DARDR according to Statutory Guidance<sup>1</sup> under Section 9 (3)(1) of the Domestic Violence, Crime, and Victims Act 2004. The Act states that there should be a "review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by-

(a) a person to whom he was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or

(b) a member of the same household as himself, held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death".

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the Home Office defines Domestic Abuse as:

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

- (a) A and B are each aged 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
- (e) Psychological, emotional or other abuse

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

"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.

For the purposes of this Act A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child).

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:

An 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. The term domestic abuse will be used throughout this review as it reflects the range of behaviours encapsulated within the above definition and avoids the inclination to view domestic abuse in terms of physical assault only.

Recommendations will be made at the end of this report, however, there has been an ongoing action plan introduced by the panel, parallel to this review to ensure that the areas that can be immediately addressed have not incurred unnecessary delay.

## Glossary

**AAFDA:** Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse

**CSP:** Community Safety Partnership

**CPFT:** Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust

**DA:** Domestic Abuse

**DASH:** Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment risk assessment

**DASV:** Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence partnership

**DHR:** Domestic Homicide Review

**GP:** General Practitioner

**HBA:** Honour Based Abuse

**ICB:** Integrated Care Board

**IDVA:** Independent Domestic Violence Advisor

**IMR:** Individual Management Review

**NOK:** Next of Kin

## Section 1 - Introduction

### 1.1 The commissioning of the review

**1.1.1** This review examines agencies responses and support given to Crystal, a 54-year-old female prior to the point of her death, when she was found deceased at her home address in Huntingdonshire during July 2023. The Police investigated the circumstances and initially arrested her partner, Graham on suspicion of murder. Following the initial investigation, the decision was not to charge Graham and a file was submitted to the Coroner with a finding that the death was non-suspicious and the cause was suspected suicide by hanging. The Coroner's inquest has been adjourned whilst this review takes place.

A referral was made by Cambridgeshire police to Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership later in the same month due to the family informing them that Crystal had previously disclosed domestic abuse to them in which she had received injuries.

A meeting was held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 with representatives from local authorities and voluntary sector where a decision was made by Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership to undertake a Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR) as it was agreed that the definition in Section 9 of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (2004) had been met.

This same meeting then continued to complete the first panel meeting of this review.

#### 1.1.2 Contributors to the review

Agency	Contribution
Cambridgeshire Police	Chronology, Panel member
Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership	Panel member, Oversight
Cambridgeshire Public Health	Summary report, Panel member
NHS Cambs and Peterborough Primary Care Integrated Care Board (ICB)	Chronology and Panel member
Huntingdonshire District Council	Oversight, Panel member
East of England Ambulance Service NHS trust (EEAST)	Chronology
Peterborough Women's Aid (The Dahlia Project)	Verbal interview, Panel member, specialist knowledge
GP Healthcare centre (Crystal and Graham)	Chronology
Cambridge and Peterborough Foundation Trust (CPFT)	Mental Health Scoping

**1.1.3** The following agencies/organisations/voluntary bodies were requested to review their records to ascertain if they held any information on Crystal or Graham during the scoping stage of the review and confirmed they did not.

Change Grow Live (CGL)  
 Cambridgeshire Adult Social Care (ASC)  
 National Probation Service  
 Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT)  
 Department of Works and Pensions – DWP  
 Cambridgeshire IDVA Service  
 Impakt Housing  
 Cambridgeshire Children’s Social Care  
 Refuge (National Database searched)

**1.1.4 Review Panel**

The following agencies/organisations/voluntary bodies have contributed to the Domestic Abuse Related Death Review by the provision of reports and chronology. On reviewing information gathered which identified incidents that may relate to Honour Based Abuse, a representative from the Dahlia Project joined the panel to provide specialist knowledge in this area.

**1.1.5** The panel comprised of the following:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Area of responsibility</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Jackie Dadd	Chair and Author	JDCG Ltd
Vickie Crompton	Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence partnership manager	Cambridgeshire County Council
DCI Jenni Brain	Public Protection	Cambridgeshire Police
Joseph Davies	Suicide Prevention Manager	Public Health Department – Cambridgeshire County Council
Rebecca Cooke	Deputy Designated Nurse for Safeguarding People & Serious Violence Health Lead	NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Board
Mandi George	Lead Officer for Domestic Abuse	Huntingdonshire District Council
Emily Fidoe	Named Professional Safeguarding Adults (NHS)	North West Anglia Foundation Trust (NWAFT) NHS
DI Alicia Yorke	Public Protection	Cambridgeshire Police
Amanda Geraghty	Chief Executive Officer	Peterborough Women’s Aid (The Dahlia Project)

All members of the panel and authors of the reports and chronologies have complete independence from any subject in this review. The Review Chair and Panel gave due consideration for the content of the DARDR and it was agreed that reports, chronologies and other supplementary details would form the basis of the information provided. Thanks

goes to all who have assisted and contributed to this review with their valued time and cooperation.

### **1.1.6 Author of the Overview report**

The chair of the review panel and author of this report is Mrs Jackie Dadd, an independent consultant who is independent of the organisation and agencies contributing to this report. She has no knowledge or association with any of the subjects in this report prior to the commissioning of this review.

She is a retired Detective Chief Inspector with Bedfordshire Police, having been the lead for domestic abuse, Stalking and harassment, so-called HBA and Serious Sexual Offences for a number of years and has been involved in the DARDR process since its inception in 2011. She has completed the Home Office online training, the Continuous Professional Development accredited AAFDA DHR Chair training and is a member of the AAFDA DHR network, regularly attending the monthly forums for CPD and discussion. Mrs Dadd has also completed the accredited Domestic Abuse and suicide course. Mrs Dadd has several DHRs completed and published.

## **1.2 Purpose of the review**

**1.2.1** The purposes of a DARDR are 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 co-ordinated 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.

**1.2.2** DARDRs are not inquiries into how the victim died or into who is culpable; that is a matter for the Coroner and criminal courts, respectively, to determine as appropriate. DARDRs are not part of any disciplinary inquiry or process. Part of the rationale for the review is to ensure that agencies are responding appropriately to victims of domestic abuse by offering and putting in place appropriate support mechanisms, procedures, resources

and interventions with an aim to avoid future incidents of domestic homicide and domestic abuse. The review also assesses whether agencies have sufficient and effective procedures and protocols in place which were understood and adhered to by their staff.

This review will ascertain whether domestic abuse could have been the cause or a contributory factor to the death of Crystal. It is not to apportion blame, but to view the circumstances through her eyes.

### 1.3 Timescales

**1.3.1** Following an investigation into the death of Crystal, Cambridgeshire Police made a referral to Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2023 due to information received from the family that Crystal had previously disclosed she had been subjected to domestic abuse and received injuries.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023, Huntingdonshire CSP in accordance with the December 2016 Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the conduct of Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews commissioned this Review.

Mrs Jackie Dadd was commissioned to provide an independent chair and author for this DARDR on the same day with two further panel meetings then taking place. The Home Office were notified on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The completed report was handed to the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2024.

#### 1.3.2 Table outlining timeline of review

July 2023	Crystal was found deceased.
25/07/23	Cambridgeshire Police send a referral to Huntingdonshire CSP
01/11/23	Decision to commission DARDR made by Huntingdonshire CSP
01/11/23	Mrs Jackie Dadd commissioned as Author and Chair
01/11/23	First Panel meeting
06/11/23	Huntingdonshire CSP notify the Home Office
01/02/24	Second panel meeting
03/05/24	Third panel meeting
02/07/24	Completed report handed to Huntingdonshire CSP by Author

**1.3.3** Home Office guidance states that the review should be completed within six months of the initial decision to establish one. There was an initial delay whilst Huntingdonshire CSP identified a Chair and Author and commissioned the review. The Panel signed off the final report prior to submission to the CSP Board.

## 1.4 Confidentiality

This report has been treated as Official sensitive and dissemination kept to those outlined at 1.9.

The pseudonyms used in this report were chosen by Crystal's sister to protect the identity of those referred to throughout the report. Full details are found at 1.6 of this report.

The CSP and Author have ensured that the collation of information and the information contained within this report complies with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## 1.5 Terms of Reference

**1.5.1** The Full Terms of Reference can be found in Appendix A at the conclusion of this report. The Terms of Reference were discussed and agreed upon during the second panel meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 as it was felt that there wasn't sufficient information available to complete this during the first panel meeting.

It was agreed that the main areas of focus and discussion would be based on the following:

- a) Has Domestic Abuse (DA) in any form been the causation or a contributory factor to Crystal taking her own life.
- b) What provisions are available for those affected by HBA within Cambridgeshire and are they communicated sufficiently?
- c) Were there any barriers to Crystal seeking support for Domestic abuse prior to her taking her own life?

It was agreed that the scoping would not be restricted by dates and to scope for any information that was held on Crystal or Graham within Cambridgeshire.

### 1.5.2 Methodology

Following the initial scoping phase, it was ascertained that there was little information held on the records of the authorities in relation to Crystal. The Coroners file submitted by the Police would be utilised and additional information forwarded in relation to the Terms of Reference if necessary to avoid duplication of work.

Family and friends were approached and identified to gain further insight and information into Crystal's life and relationships.

It was identified in the second panel due to information that was received that the panel required a specialist and information regarding Honour Based Abuse. Where applicable, organisations were asked to provide summary reports on the provisions that they offered to

establish how accessible they were and whether there would have been any barriers to Crystal accessing them.

## **1.6 Subjects of the review/Family and friends' involvement**

**1.6.1** In accordance with Home Office guidelines to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used throughout this report, chosen by Crystal's family, for the following: (All ages are recorded at the time of Crystal's death).

**Crystal** – The deceased. A 54-year-old Asian female.

**Graham** – Partner of Crystal. A 58-year-old male.

**Annabel** – Older sister of Crystal.

**Brian** – Husband of Annabel, brother-in-law to Crystal.

**Robert** – Ex-partner of Crystal. A 55-year-old white British male.

**Kate** – Long term friend of Crystal.

**1.6.2** The sister of Crystal, Annabel, wished to be fully engaged with the review and be the point of contact for the family. Communication was via various methods as to which were preferred by Annabel at that time. The author would like to express their gratitude for her significant contribution and assistance provided throughout, along with the loving tribute at the beginning of this report. Crystal's parents are sadly deceased.

**1.6.3** Annabel was sent a letter by Huntingdonshire CSP shortly after the commissioning of the DARDR to inform her of the review and provide details of AAFDA for support. She was then visited by the Author at her home address as was her preference and during this time, was provided with the Home Office leaflet and had the advocacy of AAFDA fully explained and an offer for referral was made. Annabel declined this at the time and it was re-visited on further occasions when the author spoke, emailed or met with her. Annabel was also offered to attend a panel meeting but declined as she was content with the authors updates.

**1.6.4** Friends were interviewed via phone as was their wish and their contributions can be found throughout the report and specifically at 3.1.

**1.6.5** Annabel was sent a draft copy of the report and given time to read it thoroughly before meeting with the author to discuss it. She felt that it was factual and honest and kept Crystal at the heart of it.

**1.6.6** The author made contact with Graham via email as this was the only method available and requested that he spoke to her in relation to the review. No reply was received.

## 1.7 Parallel reviews

The Coroner's inquest has been opened but postponed awaiting the completion of this review.

A forensic post-mortem examination took place in which the cause of death subject to toxicology results was found to be: -

### 1) Hanging

There was a ligature mark to the neck which was consistent with suspension hanging. There were no injuries to suggest physical assault or forceful restraint. Toxicology results show that Crystal had consumed a large amount of alcohol prior to her death at a concentration of 259mgs per 100ml which is three times the legal limit for driving in England. However, the specific effects experienced by Crystal including any effects of her state of mind cannot be commented upon as it is dependent on her tolerance level and history of alcohol consumption.

## 1.8 Equality and Diversity

**1.8.1** The review gave due consideration to each of the protected characteristics under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The relevant legislation that provided the context for the panel was The Equality Act 2010.

**1.8.2** Throughout this review process the Panel has considered the issues of equality in particular the nine protective characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

**1.8.3** Key considerations for the panel were whether sex, race, religion or belief had any relevant impact on the available services to Crystal and whether they created any barriers to her accessibility for support as Crystal defined as an Asian Muslim.

**1.8.4** Due to information received from friends and family, Crystal's race, religion and beliefs were considered relevant as indicators of Honour Based Abuse (HBA) were identified in her teenage years. The effect this may have on her later years and her behaviour within relationships was examined with specialists. HBA is a broad umbrella term used to describe a combination of practices used principally to control and punish the behaviour

of a member of a family or social group, in order to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs in the name of 'honour.'

**1.8.5** There is no statutory definition of Honour Based Abuse (HBA). However, the National Police Chief Council (NPCC) have provided guidance and a definition to Police Forces:

'an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse), which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and / or community's code of behaviour.'

**1.8.6** HBA is a form of domestic Abuse. HBA is a custom deep rooted in certain communities where the family or group is considered foremost rather than an individual. Many different societies believe in the honour code. It is most prevalent in cultures originating from South Asia, Africa and the Middle East with the highest victim group being Asian females.<sup>1</sup>

**1.8.7** In the year ending March 2022, there were 2,887 HBA-related offences recorded by the police in England and Wales. This was an increase of 6 per cent compared with the year ending March 2021 (when there were 2,725 offences).<sup>2</sup> The panel also considered the religious and cultural aspects of Crystal in her childhood and how that may have influenced her behaviours and thought process in her later life.

**1.8.8** It was considered that Crystal's sex was relevant to the review as 3-10 women a week die of suicide where they have suffered domestic abuse<sup>3</sup> and in 2018, eighty-three per cent of victims reporting coercive control to the police were female<sup>4</sup>. Statistics show that women are more likely to experience domestic abuse with 1 in 4 women in the UK.<sup>5</sup>

**1.8.9** The DASV worked alongside Public Health to review the correlation between suicide and domestic abuse. These outcomes were shared with key stakeholders working on Suicide prevention in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Cambridgeshire County Council published a Suicide Prevention Strategy in January 2023.

Research showed:

1. Domestic Abuse is a factor in around 12.5% of female suicide attempts
2. 25% of those in Domestic Abuse services have felt suicidal due to the abuse
3. Domestic Abuse victims are 8x more at risk of suicide than the general population

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<sup>1</sup> Safeguarding Hub – 9<sup>th</sup> July 2023 – Honour Based Abuse

<sup>2</sup> ONS statistics 2022 – Gov.UK [Home - Office for National Statistics](#)

<sup>3</sup> [hoping to help: Identifying and responding to suicidality amongst victims of domestic abuse - Vanessa E Munro, Ruth Aitken, 2020 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2018 [Home - Office for National Statistics](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Violence against Women and Girls and Male Position Factsheets – Home Office in the media](#)

4. 50% of Domestic Abuse victims who attempt suicide will undertake further attempts within a year
5. A third of female suicides are subject to domestic abuse
6. “Suicidal acts..... are more likely where feelings of defeat and entrapment exist alongside beliefs that neither rescue or escape are possible” Williams (2001)

## 1.9 Dissemination

Recipients who received copies of this report prior to publication:

Relevant members of Huntingdonshire CSP

Panel members

Coroner’s office

Family members

Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner

## Section 2 – The Facts

### 2.1 Background information

**2.1.1** Very little information was held on agency records for either Crystal or Graham. Information about Crystal’s personal life that is not on agencies records has been provided by her sister, Annabel and her friends. This has been recorded in their own words so that it is not misrepresented in interpretation.

**2.1.2** Crystal was born in Hillingdon and was the fifth child to her parents who were devout Muslims. Her eldest sibling was her brother who Crystal had a complex relationship with and often felt that he was prioritised over her and her other sisters and received far greater financial support from their parents. Her relationship was ok with her two eldest sisters, one of whom tragically died in her teens due to underlying health issues. Her closest relationship was with Annabel who was born earlier in the same year as Crystal so they grew up together and Crystal trusted Annabel.

**2.1.3** The children were all raised as strict Muslims in relation to what they wore and when they could go out but were not made to pray so it was moderate in some respects. Crystal didn’t like it at all and didn’t like being restricted as to what she could do. When she got a job working as a librarian, she felt liberated and wanted to be able to go out.

**2.1.4** When Crystal was 15 years of age, she worked for an insurance company and got talking to a white male called Robert who was a year older than her. They were in the post room as he also worked there. Crystal lived near to where Robert caught the bus. They became boyfriend and girlfriend but Robert describes the relationship as ‘always in the

shadows' as Crystal was fearful of the ramifications if her father found out, so he always left her when they were just round the corner from her house.

**2.1.5** They became 'serious' a year later. Robert had started a new job and by chance, became friends with Brian who was to go on to marry Annabel, Crystal's sister. Annabel states that Crystal and Robert were unable to have a proper relationship due to Crystal's religion and they kept the relationship quiet because of the culture they lived in. She described Annabel as generous, always giving presents and money to people.

**2.1.6** It was at this time, when Crystal was 16 years old that she left home to be with Robert. She didn't tell her family she was leaving or where she was going. She would periodically contact Annabel to say she was alright but there were no mobile phones at that time. Annabel remembers that she hated lying to her family as she did not tell them she was in touch with Crystal and remembers that her brother experienced the most pain of their parents having a missing daughter.

**2.1.7** Robert describes how they rented hotel rooms in Suffolk and Harrow as Crystal didn't want her brother and father to catch up with her. In 1985, when Crystal was 17 years old, her Doctors records show that she was treated for depression but doesn't outline the causation. They eventually rented a flat in London. Crystal kept a distance from Robert's family, only meeting them on a couple of occasions as she said that she was afraid of upsetting them. One day, whilst Robert was at his parent's house, Crystal banged on the door frantically saying that she had seen her father in the street. She seemed in fear and Robert stated he knew it must be bad for her to have gone to his parent's house for help.

**2.1.8** She eventually reconnected with her family at the back end of the 80's as she missed her mother. They had been away for over eighteen months. She stayed living in the flat with Robert but still did not tell them about her relationship and just visited every now and then. He recalls one time when her parents and brother visited unannounced and he had to hide under the bed for an hour and a half until they had left.

**2.1.9** About 1990, when Crystal was 22yrs old, she got a new job and within the first two weeks, Crystal was sexually assaulted by someone who worked in the warehouse. She didn't tell Robert too much about it but he knows that the police were called and the person who did it 'went on the run.' Their relationship changed after this with Robert stating that things got harder and he tried his best to make her happy. Crystal would lock herself in the bathroom saying that she couldn't go on and he feared that she would hurt herself. The first time this happened, he rang his parents in the middle of the night as he didn't know what to do. It got to the point where Crystal couldn't be around him.

**2.1.10** Doctor's records show that Crystal was treated for depression from 1990-1992. They managed to get a house together around this time but Robert states the relationship was already ending the day they moved in. He thinks she had met someone else. They stayed in touch for a while.

**2.1.11** Crystal went to stay with Annabel and Brian to get back on her feet. She wasn't 'in a good way' and they helped and supported her. She got a job with a fabric company and

became more confident, eventually moving to a rental property in Wembley Park and her career started to go from strength to strength and she was back on her feet.

**2.1.12** Around 1994, Crystal married a white male who she had met through work. Annabel drove her to the wedding but the remainder of her family were not aware and never found out. Crystal left him soon after the wedding but did not get divorced until years later. Crystal was doing well at work and earning a good wage, so she bought a flat in Watford from her brother-in-law, Brian. She saw her mum and sisters regularly.

**2.1.13** Crystal's father died in 2004. Annabel recalls that at 42 years old, Crystal had the early onset of menopause which affected her massively and made her vulnerable and depressed. This is not recorded in her medical records and it is not known whether Crystal disclosed this to her Doctor.

**2.1.14** Around 2010, Crystal (who would have been about 43 years old at the time) met an Irish male called Graham on an internet dating site. He was living in Stevenage in rented accommodation at the time and had two children who lived with their mother. Soon after they met, he moved into the flat in Watford with Crystal. He was bankrupt at the time they met and came across to Annabel as not quite the usual partner that Crystal would have been attracted to, very rarely working but did have a job at that time.

**2.1.15** At this time, Crystal was excelling in sales for her company but Annabel noticed that her upward trend stalled when she met Graham as she had too many distractions. She paid off his debts and he soon moved his children into the flat. Over the next years, Crystal began to see less and less of her family and friends as she moved location on numerous occasions, each time further away from London. Her family only saw her at their homes, never hers. When Graham came to their house with Crystal, Annabel can remember him being rude and drinking a lot and she would say to Crystal, "Don't let him speak to you like that" but Crystal seemed happy. Crystal's mother tolerated him for her.

**2.1.16** Crystal was registered at a Watford GP surgery from 2005 to 2016. There is no record of domestic abuse noted on her records. Graham had been registered as her partner on medical records since 2011. During these years, (Annabel is not sure of the actual year), Graham's daughter had a child whilst in her school years. Things were a bit of a challenge but Crystal did all she could to help.

**2.1.17** Annabel remembers Crystal staying in Luton of which medical records show her at two separate surgeries between 2016 and 2018. Crystal was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis in 2016 for which she took medication. Graham's GP registrations were at the same location and times as Crystal's since 2011.

**2.1.18** In 2015, Crystal came back into contact with Robert as he had messaged her on LinkedIn and they met up for lunch and a chat whilst she was in London working. They contacted each other on and off after that with Crystal not always replying for several months. At one stage, Crystal text Robert that they would be back together within a year but this never happened.

**2.1.19** In 2018, totally out of the blue, Annabel received a picture from Crystal sent on her mobile phone of Annabel with two black eyes. She admitted to her about a month later that Graham had beat her up but would not say what the circumstances were. Graham contacted Annabel and said he was 'sorry' but did not go to their house for a long time afterwards and Annabel only spoke to him for Crystal's sake. Annabel told her to go to the police but she said it was a 'one off' and that she was not scared of him.

**2.1.20** Annabel recalls that Crystal struggled through covid as she was isolated and had used a lot of her money helping Graham's daughter with the baby, although said that this was willingly. She spoke to Annabel about leaving him.

**2.1.21** Huntingdonshire District Council records show that Graham and Crystal became owners of a house in their area in September 2021. They were both registered at a GP surgery in Wellingborough before registering in the Cambridgeshire area at Healthcare Centre in October 2021.

**2.1.22** In August 2022, Crystal's mother died. Crystal hadn't been herself for some time. About a month later, She rang Annabel crying and told her that Graham had "hit me again" whilst watching a TV programme and that she had put a cushion over her head to stop facial injuries. She said that she was going to leave him but needed money to pay him off as although she had bought the house, it was in both of their names. Crystal stated that she did not want the police involved and Annabel felt that she could not contact anyone against her wishes as it would alienate her from the family.

**2.1.23** Crystal withdrew from Annabel and it was difficult for Annabel to get her to talk. Crystal's relationship with her brother was still tense at the time with a disagreement over inheritance.

**2.1.24** On Christmas day, 2022, Robert received a text from Crystal stating that she had 'the worst Xmas day ever'. He was unable to reply that day as he was caring for his father and when he did reply, he never received a response. This had been the last contact he received from Crystal.

**2.1.25** In January 2023, Crystal contacted her friend, Kate and told her that Graham had pushed her against a wardrobe and been violent towards her in which she had received a number of injuries with bruising to her face and a black eye. She told Kate she had 'got it under control' and didn't want anyone knowing. This was the last time Kate managed to speak with Crystal.

**2.1.26** Annabel's last contact with Crystal was in June 2023 by text late at night. Annabel was updating Crystal on the sale of their mum's house. Crystal wrote: -

"I'm sorry sis...I'm desperate to leave and start a new life or offer him money to sign the house over to me...I have to fight for my 20%"

**2.1.27** Annabel sent her a supportive comforting message and Crystal replied that she had lost the fight for her inheritance. She stated her savings were less than 2k and she was still paying the nursery fees for Graham's daughter's child.

## 2.2 Circumstances of the death of Crystal

**2.2.1** In July 2023, Police and Ambulance were called to Crystal's home address following a 999-phone call from Graham stating that he had found Crystal hanging from the banister and that she was dead. The Paramedics were already present when the police arrived. They witnessed Crystal's body hanging from the banister of the staircase in an open plan living room. The body was cold to touch with onset of rigor mortis. The Police officer attending described the positioning of the body as though he felt she looked like she had 'almost been placed there.' The knot on the cord was described as 'intricate' and wrapped around.

**2.2.2** Her partner, Graham was spoken to in the kitchen area. Graham informed him almost straight away that he was an ex-police officer. The officer speaking to him stated that he could smell stale alcohol as if he had been drinking the night before. He described how he and Crystal had been drinking the night before and had a curry takeaway, describing it as 'a lovely evening.' He told the officer that Crystal had asked him to have sex with her and that they then fell asleep in the same bed, where ordinarily, they slept in different bedrooms as he snored.

**2.2.3** Graham noticed in the middle of the night that Crystal was not lying next to him but went back to sleep as he thought she had gone to the toilet. At 07.02hrs, the following morning, Graham stated that he got up to go to the toilet and saw Crystal hanging from the banister. He said that she felt cold to touch and due to his previous experience, he knew she had gone and called 999, not touching her further to preserve her for any investigation.

**2.2.4** Graham went on to tell the officer that Crystal had started the menopause and had recently gone back on medication for this. He said that in the last couple of weeks, Crystal had made off the cuff comments to him about not wanting to be here and wanted to take her own life but also told him she wouldn't as it would upset her family.

**2.2.5** Whilst talking to the officer, Graham made several calls informing people of Crystal's death. One of the phone calls was to Annabel who requested to speak to the police officer. She informed him that Crystal had disclosed two separate occasions of domestic violence previously to her where Graham had caused bruising and beaten her 'black and blue' where she had to cover her face and that his version of the previous night being 'lovely' did not seem right.

**2.2.6** Following consultation with supervising officers at the scene, Graham was arrested on suspicion of murder and taken away from the address. Following an investigation, he was refused charge and a coroner's file was submitted stating that the death was to be considered as non-suspicious, indicative of suicide by way of hanging.

**2.2.7** Graham went back to Ireland with his brother two days after Crystal's death and did not go to Crystal's funeral.

**2.2.8** Annabel met Kate by chance about a month after Crystal's death and when they spoke, they realised that Crystal had described different incidents to them of when Graham

had beat her and realised that this may have happened more frequently than Crystal had stated.

## 2.3 Individual management reviews (IMRs)

Following the scoping process that identified that agencies and organisations had minimal contact with Crystal and did not hold records on her, it was identified that there was no requirement to request IMRs.

### 2.3.1 Cambridgeshire Police

Cambridgeshire Police have no record of Crystal or Graham on any of their systems prior to the attendance in relation to Crystal's death.

Cambridgeshire Police provided the review with access to the submitted Coroner's file to avoid duplicating this into an IMR with the understanding that they would supply any further information in regard to the Terms of Reference if required.

**July 2023** – Police were called to an address in Huntingdon in response to a phone call from a male stating his partner had taken her own life by hanging. The Paramedics were already present on police arrival. Officers witnessed Crystal's body 'in situ' hanging from the banister of the staircase in an open plan living room. The officer attending was not content with the positioning of the body and described it as though he felt she looked like she had 'almost been placed there and described the knot on the cord as 'intricate' and wrapped around.

Her partner, Graham was spoken to in the kitchen area. Graham informed him almost straight away that he was an ex-police officer. The officer speaking to him stated that he could smell stale alcohol as if he had been drinking the night before. Graham outlined the events of the previous evening, stating that he had sex with Crystal after she asked him and described their usual sleeping arrangements of separate bedrooms. He described how he came to find Crystal that morning. Graham explained that Crystal had started the menopause and had said that she had made comments to him about how she 'did not want to be here anymore,' although she would not take her own life due to the upset it would cause to her family. Graham said that they had been together for thirteen years.

Having made several calls informing people of Crystal's death whilst Graham was speaking to him, the officer became aware of Graham speaking on the phone with Annabel, Crystal's sister. He took the phone from Graham and went outside to meet his supervisor for them both to listen to the call. Annabel disclosed two separate incidents of Graham assaulting Crystal previously that she had told her about and of her concern of the account of the previous night that Graham had provided.

A decision was made to arrest Graham on suspicion of murder to which he replied "ok" and was described by the officer as appearing calm. A search was conducted of the premises and items seized, recorded and exhibited.

### 2.3.2 Good practice

Body Worn Video protocol was adhered to when speaking to witnesses.

The Sudden Death policy was adhered to in relation to oversight by supervisors and the Detective Inspector. Consideration of domestic abuse taken into account at the scene.

## 2.4 Summary reports

### 2.4.1 East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Information taken from submission from scoping and the incident report generated when attending Crystal's death. There was only one record in relation to their home address recorded over a period of three years which was the attendance following Crystal's death.

**July 2023** – A 999 call was received from Graham with the significant event recorded as report of cardiac arrest (hanging) of Crystal. It was noted the caller was unwilling to cut her down.

The first crew arrived three minutes later. Graham answered the door and pointed to the stairway. Crystal was hanging from the banister on the stairway and was cold to touch with rigor mortis onset. Crystal had a long silk like cord, potentially a scarf or dressing gown cord around her neck.

Graham was talking calmly and rationally, stating that he was an ex-police officer and as the crew began to tell him that Crystal had died, he interrupted stating that he knew due to the 'lividity.' They moved Graham to the kitchen to speak with him and did not cut Crystal down as they were awaited the police to arrive.

Graham made multiple phone calls to both his and Crystal's family members and placed the family members on speaker as he informed them of her death. He informed them that she had hung herself and was still in situ, also stating the police and ambulance were there.

Graham provided the following information:

In the past few days Crystal had told him that she was not feeling right and wanted to end her life. He stated that she had been asking help but he didn't know how. He said that Crystal had been drinking more in the evenings compared to normal. Crystal was under a lot of stress with work and had recently been placed back on HRT. Crystal went away for work on Wednesday and stayed away overnight, She returned yesterday at around 2pm and had been frustrated due to a parking situation within the close and was venting about this. He stated that Crystal was not right last night and was drinking a lot - she became nasty with her drinking. They watched TV and then went to bed. Partner states the patient had to be assisted to bed and to the toilet due to being intoxicated. Graham and Crystal do not usually sleep in the same room due to snoring but last night they were intimate and then slept in the same room. Graham stated this was a "fantastic night". He was unsure what time Crystal left the room during the night; believes he last heard her around midnight. He woke up during the night and noticed she was not there and believed she had moved next door due to his snoring as they usually sleep in different rooms. He stated he woke up and walked out of the room at 07:02hrs due to hearing the cat and found her hanging from the stair banister, felt her and found she was cold. He then called 999 and asked for police and ambulance. He refused to cut her down.

#### **2.4.2 GP Healthcare Centre**

Crystal was registered with four separate Healthcare centres between 2016 and her death due to her moving location. The Healthcare Centre providing information to this review had access to her previous medical records. Crystal had registered with this practice on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. Graham had registered himself three days earlier.

A history of her medical diagnosis shows that there is a record of depression in 1985 and 1990-1992 respectively but has no clinical diagnosis of depression since then. Crystal had suffered from Rheumatoid arthritis since 2016 and was on medication for this. She engaged well with both the consultant Rheumatologists and with the GP practices for regular Bloods and Medication.

Her partner since May 2011 has been recorded on her records as Graham.

In Feb 2019 she reported to her Rheumatologist that she was an ex-smoker and was drinking approximately 25 units of alcohol per week. Crystal was commenced at her request on combined HRT in 2019 and she requested this to be stopped in January 2021 and a reduction plan was put in place.

There is no information on the GP medical records regarding history of Domestic Abuse or concerns raised with the GP regarding any relationship problems. There have been no concerns raised in respect of her treatment and engagement. Her last consultation with primary care was 31st March 2023 when she attended a phlebotomy appointment with our for her monitoring of bloods.

Crystal has not had any recent consultations in primary care with regards to her mental health, suicidal thoughts or thoughts of self-harm.

#### **2.4.3 Peterborough Women's Aid – The Dahlia Project**

The Dahlia Project is funded by the Home Office. Peterborough Women's Aid hold the funding for the Dahlia Project in their area. Having a representative on the panel and being able to speak to the trained staff provided the review with specialist knowledge and understanding to the issues that surround Honour Based Abuse.

The Dahlia Project was launched in Peterborough in July 2023 following research from Dr Mirna Guha at the Anglian Ruskin University in which the need within the area was identified particularly for South Asian females. The funding is for two years but further research should secure further funding, not just for Peterborough but across Cambridgeshire.

The project provides support and assistance where necessary to those suffering from HBA and can assist with planning and safeguarding, whether that be for staying with the family or for leaving. It also provides practical help such as obtaining GP appointments and refuge placement. It supports victims along the journey from reporting to the police and onwards as without this support, a large proportion of victims withdraw due to the lack of understanding of their needs.

The Dahlia project has a website that is easily accessible, provides anonymous advice lines and also anonymous instant chat lines and can offer a safe place. Knowledge of the Project is often by 'word of mouth.' Within the first eight months, they had received around 100 referrals. It is community led and staffed by South Asian women who can speak multiple languages. The Dahlia Project will not turn anyone away who is in need of support, including those not specifically within Peterborough but across Cambridgeshire.

On learning the circumstances surrounding Crystal from the information gathered for this report, trained staff from the Dahlia Project have stated that the circumstances fit the criteria of honour based abuse due to the actions of Crystal when she was younger of feeling the need to hide her relationship, flee the home and be in fear of her father and brother, particularly when she saw them by chance in the street.

Once Crystal had left home, this is known as the risk zone as this is the action that causes the most dishonour in the eyes of the family as they know that the community will be aware. This may be why Crystal was in such fear on the occasion she saw her father in the street.

The Dahlia project and Women's Aid are innovative in their methods to enable face to face meetings and communication as they know that this can be a barrier if someone is being controlled for example and conduct risk assessments surrounding this.

For clarity, Crystal never approached the Dahlia project for support and a referral was never received in relation to her.

#### **2.4.4 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Foundation Trust – CPFT**

Consent was obtained by the author of the CPFT submission from Graham on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2023.

**July 2023** - Following a referral to CPFT Liaison and Diversion Service (LaDS) following Crystal's death, his arrest and subsequent bail, he was offered support and provided information on Op Nova (support for ex-military) as he was an ex-service person. He declined support as he had family support and was closed to them a month later.

There are no records in relation to Crystal that were found.

#### **2.4.5 Cambridgeshire Public Health**

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System has identified Motivation as a key workstream within the mental health priority of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. There are currently two deliverables within this workstream:

- a) Provide evidence base for interventions which improve an individual's motivation to engage with activities and formal services

- b) Improve motivation and engagement in interventions to improve mental wellbeing for high-risk cohorts

The workstream started in December 2023 and early work has been conducted into identifying different motivational barriers for a variety of audiences ranging from those with no mental health challenge through to those who are actively receiving support.

The British Medical Bulletin<sup>6</sup> reports on a clinical review of 15 years findings from the UK National Confidential Inquiry into suicide. Data shows that suicide is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death worldwide accounting for 1.5% of all deaths equating to 14.5/100,000 persons per year.<sup>7</sup> Although it states that whilst suicide is multifaceted and rarely the result of any single cause, approx. 90% of individuals who die by suicide have a mental illness. Mental illness increases the risk of suicide between 5- and 15- fold compared with the general population. However, these figures show that whilst mental health is a key indicator of suicide risk, there will be some cases in which mental health is not a factor at all and this shouldn't be overlooked.

In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough there are two websites advertising local offers of support through a wider community wellbeing/mental health offer. For an individual who is seeking support but reluctant to search for domestic abuse related terms, it is important that domestic abuse resources are embedded within these to allow for signposting through alternative routes.

Keep Your Head is a mental health website bringing together information on local services that can support people going through various mental health issues or difficulties in life that can contribute to poor mental health. There is currently already a page relating to domestic abuse services (Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Adults Mental Health Support - Sexual and Domestic Violence (keep-your-head.com)) and it is worth noting that in 2024, the site will be refreshed to improve usability and ensure support is more easily accessed. During this process, one of the changes is that there will be additional resources highlighted for friends, family and carers of people going through various difficulties.

How Are You (HAY) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (How Are You Cambridgeshire and Peterborough | H.A.Y. Home (haycambspboro.co.uk)) is a family of websites that bring together a wide range of local support and activities to promote general wellbeing. The website is map-based, allowing individuals to find support local to them. There is a tag relating to domestic abuse resources in each area.

#### **2.4.6 Employers**

The author made contact with Crystal's employers via email explaining the DARDR process and requesting to speak with them but received no response. However, Annabel had

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<sup>6</sup> Suicide and mental illness: a clinical review of 15 years findings from the UK National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide | British Medical Bulletin | Oxford Academic (oup.com)

<sup>7</sup> Hawton K, van Heeringen K. Suicide, *Lancet*, 2009, vol.373 (pg.1372-81)

contacted them soon after Crystal's death and they informed her that they had not been aware she was suffering abuse and had never mentioned or shown any signs of it of which they were aware. They did comment that Crystal had to leave work early on a couple of occasions following receiving phone calls from Graham but did not know why.

The employers are a London firm and have no affiliation with Cambridgeshire.

#### **2.4.7 Clare's Law**

The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), also known as Clare's law, enables the Police to disclose information to a victim or potential victim of domestic abuse about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending. This was implemented across all police forces in England and Wales in March 2014.

It is to provide a victim or potential victim with enough information to make an informed decision on their relationship and highlight any potential risk they may be facing if they continue in that relationship. The scheme has two elements: "Right to Ask" and "Right to Know." This allows an individual or relevant third party to ask the police to check if their partner or ex-partner has a violent or abusive past. The police will consider whether to disclose any information due to its relevancy. It also allows the police to make disclosure on their own initiative if they feel a person's violent or abusive behaviour may impact on the safety of their current partner.

## **Section 3 - Analysis**

### **3.1 Family and friends' involvement and perspective**

#### **3.1.1 Annabel**

(Written in Annabel's own words to maintain context)

Annabel loved Crystal dearly and was her closest sibling, remaining in contact with her throughout her life, even when she was not in contact with the remainder of the family.

Annabel believes that Graham has benefited from Crystal's death as he has received a substantial payout from her current employers having changed her beneficiary from her nieces and nephews to him when she rejoined the company. Although Crystal paid off all of Graham's debts, funded his grandchild even though she had never wanted children and bought the house in both of their names, Annabel spoke about this privately to her and is certain that Crystal did this out of kindness and generosity because she wanted to rather than feeling obliged or under pressure when the author spoke to her about economic abuse.

Annabel states that each of Crystal's relationships through her life were with white males. She made 'bad choices' with men and even said to Annabel that "I attract the wrong men." She was gorgeous and men came to her. Robert was a nice boyfriend and Crystal ran away with him because she could not conform to rules. Whenever something was going well, she

would destroy it as she didn't feel that she deserved it and was destructive. When she reconnected with the family, it was never the same.

Annabel describes Crystal as bubbly, assertive and alive. She was immensely proud of how she built up her career. When she first got into a relationship with Graham, Annabel saw nothing that made her think she was unhappy in the relationship.

Annabel states that when she looks back, Crystal appeared to walk on eggshells in front of Graham and there were small changes in her presentation, she was more subdued and quieter, as if she had given up and lost her mojo. She particularly struggled during covid when she was the most isolated.

She describes Crystal as very private and proud. She would not have gone to the police or authorities about the domestic abuse and would have alienated herself from the family if Annabel had broke her trust. Annabel states that families feel helpless when they are told that someone they love is suffering but are not allowed to say anything. Her Doctor was the only conduit Crystal had but she would not and did not go to see them with her injuries. Annabel also said that Crystal would not have contacted domestic abuse support services but was smart enough to know how to find them if she had wanted to.

Annabel recalls that when Crystal disclosed the incident where she held a cushion over her head to protect herself, she said, "I just let him do it" and it was as if she had given up.

Although Crystal suffered on and off in her life with depression, Annabel would not class it as her having mental health issues and never thought she would ever take her own life. Annabel and her husband, Brian are devastated at losing Crystal.

### **3.1.2 Robert (ex-boyfriend)**

(Written with Roberts own words to maintain context)

Robert states that Crystal was 'the love of his life' and he is lucky to have known her. Their relationship was difficult due to the secrecy and Crystal didn't 'share stuff' with him. Although he knew there would be ramifications from her father and brother, he never knew what these were and never asked her as she didn't like him asking things. She never mentioned violence to him.

Robert describes Crystal as very volatile and would have meltdowns when she was upset. She was insanely passionate, vulnerable and loving. Robert never found out the outcome of the sexual assault. He said that Crystal just wanted to be loved and have a normal family life.

### **3.1.3 Kate (Friend)**

Kate had known and been great friends with Crystal for over twenty years and had met her through work. Crystal was a bridesmaid at Kate's wedding. She describes her as beautiful, kind and generous. Crystal was also fun, lively and enjoyed her job.

Kate met Graham on a few occasions. She didn't think he was suited to Crystal and wasn't sure what attracted her to him. Crystal had never wanted children and there were a lot of issues with his daughter. They used to speak all the time but this became less and less often

once she had got together with Graham. They moved further and further away from London which on reflection, Kate thinks was to isolate Crystal. They only met up when Crystal was working in London and they were both free.

Crystal told Kate that she felt 'stuck' as she had bought a house far away and put her money into it and Graham had not paid her back. She disclosed to her that Graham had pushed her against a wardrobe and been violent towards her which shocked Kate as she didn't think Crystal would have 'put up with that behaviour.' Crystal received a number of injuries including bruising to her face and a black eye. She said that he wouldn't do it again and had no idea why he had done it. Kate was worried for her as she lived so far away.

Kate told Annabel of this incident following Crystal's death.

## **3.2 Terms of reference areas**

### **3.2.1 Has Domestic Abuse (DA) in any form been the causation or a contributory factor to Crystal taking her own life.**

Crystal disclosed receiving physical violence from Graham to both her sister, Annabel and her best friend, Kate which appear to be different incidents. It may be that due to the fact that Crystal described on the second disclosure to Annabel that she had covered her head with a cushion to prevent facial injuries, that she was accustomed to these beatings and had learnt how to protect herself in the best way possible.

Annabel describes how she noticed slight changes to Crystal's presentation as she appeared more subdued and had lost her mojo. These may be signs due to fear of violence, controlling and coercive behaviour where her behaviour is conforming to that of what she believes Graham wants it to be or long-term emotional abuse where she has been 'ground down' and has lost the will to fight in any challenges in life due to 'life fatigue' at the way she is constantly treated.

There are indications that Crystal suffered from economic abuse as the sole wage earner in the relationship, paying off Graham's bankruptcy debts and diluting her savings in supporting him and his daughter's child. She also made him the beneficiary of her employers insurance which was investigated on her death by the police and nothing found that was untoward about this. Annabel stated that she had asked Crystal about this and Annabel was convinced that Crystal had done these things out of generosity and the kindness of her heart as she wasn't bothered about it at the time at all.

The review has benefited greatly from being able to analyse friends and family observations due to the lack of recording of domestic abuse with agencies.

### **3.2.2 What provisions are available for those affected by HBA within Cambridgeshire and are they communicated sufficiently?**

This review outlines research conducted by the Anglian Ruskin University that identified a need for support for South Asian females within Peterborough in relation to Honour based abuse. Peterborough Women’s Aid obtained funding for the Dahlia Project to provide a provision and support. The website is accessible in a number of languages and the high demand there has been since its inception has been due to this and ‘word of mouth.’ This provides evidence of the quality of support that is provided due to the recommendation of those who have used the service to others in the community.

Although the Dahlia Project state that they will not turn anyone away even if they are not in their jurisdiction, it must be taken into account that the funding and resources are for the demand in Peterborough alone. The fact that both emotional support and practical help is offered is commended as good practice.

Further research is currently being conducted with early indications showing that there is also the demand across the remainder of Cambridgeshire to have access to this provision and support in this area for the community. (Recommendation refers)

### **3.2.3 Were there any barriers to Crystal seeking support for Domestic abuse prior to her taking her own life?**

The panel have reviewed their agencies websites and those of other support provisions in the area and are satisfied that they are accessible, user friendly and provide pathways to support and provisions in the area and nationally. They provide information on a number of different aspects of domestic abuse including Honour Based Abuse and controlling and coercive behaviour.

Crystal was successful in her job and capable of using the internet to identify sources of support so that is not seen as a barrier. She moved location numerous times, each time further away from London which her sister observed as her becoming more isolated each time. As a private person not willing to disclose her personal issues, as described by both Annabel and Robert, her frequency in moving location may have meant that she would have been unable to build a relationship with professionals in order to build the trust to disclose any abuse. Working from home on a regular basis and only attending London infrequently to see her colleagues may also have prevented the type of trusted relationship with them for any disclosure to be made.

Cambridgeshire Public Health have a number of websites to assist with their Suicide Prevention Strategy such as How Are You Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (HAY) and Keep Your Head which are linked with domestic abuse but are not widely publicised. (recommendation refers)

## **Section 4 – Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

**4.1.1** This review has been conducted in relation to a suicide as the panel were satisfied that Cambridgeshire Police had conducted a thorough investigation into whether there may have been third party involvement including the arrest of Crystal's partner, Graham on suspicion of murder and conducting a forensic post-mortem and did not find evidence to substantiate this was not a suicide.

**4.1.2** The panel have ensured that with the lack of agency involvement with Crystal, that the voice of her family and the people who knew her has been heard within this review to provide context surrounding her life.

**4.1.3** Crystal grew up as the youngest sibling of a devout Muslim in an Asian community. Crystal didn't like the restrictions that this put on her and eventually 'ran away' from home when she was 16 years old with a white male boyfriend, Robert. Due to her young age, this would have increased her vulnerability. She only made contact with her closest sister, Annabel for two years and Robert has spoken of the fear that Crystal had of her brother and father finding out where she was. She never explained to Robert why she was in fear and although she never mentioned violence and the family have not suggested this, specialist advice on the circumstances and behaviour of Crystal surrounding this would suggest that Honour Based Abuse may have been the threat as leaving home in that manner would cause dishonour to the family.

**4.1.4** The privacy of this early relationship, the pressure that Crystal would have been under and the upbringing of honour and pride, will all have influenced her throughout her life and potentially been the foundation as to why she would never have disclosed domestic abuse to anyone apart from her sister and closest friend, even then, not disclosing the full threat and affect this had on her.

**4.1.5** Cambridgeshire Public Health alongside the Integrated Care Board have identified that there are those who may not want to disclose their abuse to agencies or ask for support and have implemented a response to this. Due to it being in its early stages, they are unable to evaluate it but should be commended for its implementation.

**4.1.6** Research has identified the need for support for South Asian women within Peterborough of which the demand has quantified this need. With further research being conducted into the remainder of Cambridgeshire to identify the requirement for similar provisions to be available, of which the early indication is that there is the demand for the Dahlia project to be expanded across the area and funding streams to be identified for this. The panel have identified the Dahlia project as good practice.

**4.1.7** The panel were satisfied that websites across the agencies were accessible, provided information in multiple languages and highlighted poignant information to those suffering from domestic abuse but due to information provided by Crystal's friend and sister, she would not access these by choice.

**4.1.8** With the lack of agency involvement, the panel have identified domestic abuse towards Crystal through direct disclosures from Crystal to family and friends and their observations, although these are few due to Crystal's private nature. The possibility of

economic abuse was considered due to Crystal paying off Graham's debts, using her money to fund the nursery for his grandchild, being the main wage earner in the family, the reduction of her funds and savings from the time she met Graham and the purchase of the home which was put in joint names. However, the panel respect the observations of Annabel that Crystal did this willingly due to her generous personality, even if she may have later regretted this and therefore have not found evidence of economic abuse.

**4.1.9** Physical violence is evident from the disclosures and photographic evidence of injuries that Crystal made to both Annabel and Kate and although potentially only three occasions have been identified, it would be remiss of the panel to not assume that there were other occasions in which this would have occurred. Emotional abuse and potentially controlling and coercive behaviour may be evident by Annabel's observations of Crystal losing her mojo and the small changes in her presentation along with her employer commenting on her need to go home from work early. Also, the stall of her upward trend at work once she met Graham may be as a result of this.

**4.1.10** Apart from the disclosure from Graham to the police after Crystal's death, there were no indications to the family and friends that she spoke to that she was contemplating taking her life. Cambridgeshire Public Health have a Suicide Prevention Strategy with learning programmes being delivered to a number of agencies across the county in awareness, identification and pathways for support.

**4.1.11** The panel concluded that there may have been a number of contributing factors in Crystal taking her own life. She had suffered from depression on and off throughout her life although not always seeking medical attention for this. The loss of her mother who she loved dearly and the turbulent relationship with her brother in the months leading up to Crystal's death, culminating in potentially not receiving inheritance at a time when she needed it, may have all impacted her state of mind.

**4.1.12** However, the comments to Annabel in relation to her thinking about leaving Graham during covid, through to the same state of mind, almost appearing desperate in her final text to her sister, stating that she wanted to start a new life but not having the money to do so, brings the panel to the conclusion that the domestic abuse she was receiving was a contributory factor in Crystal taking her own life.

## **4.2 Lessons to be learnt**

### **4.2.1 Organisational acceptance that some people will not disclose due to their private personality and beliefs and how to support this.**

Crystal has been described by her sister as a very private person and there is very little information held on her by professionals on their records. The panel discussed this in depth and concluded that it has to be accepted that there will be some victims who will not disclose to professionals or people they do not know and if they disclose to family members

and ask them not to tell anyone, this puts them in an emotional dilemma as outlined by Annabel.

Therefore, the panel discussed how the victim may still be able to receive support and identified that if family members were provided appropriate information through media, online communication and Clare's law was more widely advised and utilised, this would both support the victim and provide a means of support for the family who would feel like they were assisting and not feel so helpless, as described by Annabel. (recommendations refer)

#### **4.2.2 Next of Kin (NOK) considerations following the death of a domestic abuse victim**

Graham was recorded as the Next of Kin on Crystal's medical records and they had been partners for many years. It was only by chance that the police spoke to Annabel at the scene because she was already on the phone with Graham. Support and administrative procedures are provided for the Next of Kin and not the wider family. In the case where the Next of Kin (partner) is a perpetrator of domestic abuse, this causes additional anxiety and stress with no means of referral for access to support for the family. Processes should be in place to recognise and rectify this in the relevant circumstances. (recommendation refers)

### **4.3 Recommendations**

#### **National**

There is no national recommendation identified from this review

#### **Local**

- 1) Cambridgeshire Police to communicate to frontline officers attending any death where there is domestic abuse history within the relationship, to consider the support needs of wider family members when the Next of Kin has been the potential abuser.**

This will enable support provisions to be offered to the family following their loved ones death. This will assist them at a time when they need it most and make them feel that they have not also been controlled by the perpetrator due to the process.

- 2) Cambridgeshire Police to promote Clare's Law with concentrated focus on family/friends who may have concerns and those from differing cultures.**

This will provide further awareness for agencies and support provisions to advise family members who have concerns for loved ones for the risk to be assessed and their loved one to be advised if applicable for them to make a more informed decision.

**3) Peterborough Women's Aid to identify a funding stream to expand the Dahlia Project as a provision across Cambridgeshire.**

This will enable victims of HBA access to support across the County and provide sufficient resources to respond to demand in the South Asian community. An expansion to the project will also enable professionals such as the police, social care health to receive specialist training in Honour Based Abuse to ensure it is identified and the risks surrounding this type of abuse understood and responses are appropriate.

**4) DASV to promote pathways for families and friends to assist in advice for them supporting a victim and also to provide support for themselves including in the aftermath of their loved ones death through DA.**

This will provide families and friends with vital information to support in the event that their loved one is suffering from domestic abuse but does not wish for them to tell anyone.

**5) Public Health to promote the mental health websites of 'Keep Your Head' and How Are You (HAY) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to assist those who are affected by mental health and domestic abuse and to assist their wider family members when searching the internet for support in these areas.**

Systemwide promotion of the above sites could potentially raise awareness further of domestic abuse services available in the county and the correlation DA has with suicide.

**6) GP Surgery to reinforce 'make every contact count' and ensure all GP's provide the opportunity for disclosure of DA.**

This is to provide professional curiosity about DA within the health centre and to encourage them to ask questions in regard to their relationships and safety within the home.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Terms of Reference

- The panel are not to be restricted by dates and to scope if any information is held on Crystal or Graham within Cambridgeshire.
- This is to be reviewed as a suicide based on the investigation by appropriate authorities. The purpose is to establish if DA was a contributory factor in the death of Crystal.
- Ensure the review seeks to involve the family in the process and takes account of who the family may wish to have involved as lead members. Identify any other people the family think may assist or be relevant in the review process.
- Seek the involvement of employers and friends to provide contextualised analysis of the events.
- Establish accessibility of services for those contemplating suicide and whether training has been received in relation to the effects DA may have towards this.
- What information is available to professionals and employers within Cambridgeshire in regard to domestic abuse and suicide. What training have they had and what policies do they have in place to be able to respond to any disclosures from employees.
- Were procedures sensitive to the ethnic, cultural, and religious identity of Crystal. Were any of the other protected characteristics relevant in this case?
- Identify and highlight good practice for wider sharing
- Do communications and publications within Cambridgeshire provide sufficient accessibility to information for the public in relation to domestic abuse including HBA
- Panel to have a parallel action plan if required for expedited implementation where practicable during the review

