

# LEARNING FROM DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW

## Shunay - 2023

### WHAT HAPPENED?

Shunay died by suicide in early 2023 she was 34 years old.

Shunay had been employed by a private health practice since November 2021 as a senior nurse and remained with this employer until her death. She was in a relationship with a coworker who was concurrently in a relationship with another person.

The police recovered three suicide letters written by Shunay. The suicide note addressed to her partner stated she felt that he had emotionally and mentally abused her for over a year, also writing that "I believed you loved me, but it was all control" and "you threatened to expose pictures of me". Other notes addressed to family members stated that she had asked her partner to leave her alone, but he would not.

In the days leading to her death, Shunay told two friends that she wanted to die. South Yorkshire Police (SYP) attended her property two days before her suicide, she informed them that she did not intend to take her life and the incident was closed. Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) attended the following day, Shunay was intoxicated but deemed to have capacity, she declined a referral to her GP and all other help and did not wish to travel with the YAS crew. YAS alerted SYP that they believed that Shunay was going to take her life and left the property some hours later, leaving Shunay with a friend and in the belief that SYP would attend. She was found deceased by a friend the following day.

### WHAT DID IT TELL US?

Shunay previously self-harmed: she had self-inflicted cuts after the ending of an earlier relationship and had reported using sleeping tablets and alcohol to aid sleep. She stated that her use of alcohol was excessive.

Self-harm is a behaviour that some people employ to cope with internal pain and anguish. According to research<sup>1</sup>, there is a link between domestic abuse and self-harm. Females who had separated from their partners were also more likely to take an overdose.

According to the Lancet<sup>2</sup>, one in every three women who attempted suicide in the previous year was a victim of intimate partner violence, compared to one in every twenty women in the general population. As a result, the findings suggest routine inquiries regarding intimate partner violence in healthcare settings, with precautions in place to protect those exposed. Suicide attempts and self-harming behaviours, in addition, are significant risk markers for eventual suicide and recognition of this is essential to suicide prevention.

The review found that the coercive control disclosed by Shunay in her suicide notes was not recognised before her death. Coercive control is a course of conduct offence and can include threats, humiliation, intimidation, or abuse designed to damage, punish, or intimidate the victim. This behaviour is intended to make a person reliant by isolating them from assistance, exploiting them, robbing them of independence, and dictating their daily behaviour.

### WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

<p>Professionals should be aware of the intersection between mental health and domestic abuse and seek opportunities to ask patients if they feel safe at home.</p>	<p>Confirmation bias can prevent professional curiosity about what might help safeguard the person in the future. Professionals should ask questions to establish the facts, and question purposefully when there are concerns.</p>	<p>Professionals should be especially curious when someone discloses they are misusing substances to ascertain whether this is being used as a strategy to cope with domestic abuse.</p>	<p>Attempted suicide can be a potential indicator of domestic abuse. Consideration needs to be given to adopting a Domestic Abuse Routine Enquiry model as part of the city's approach to suicide prevention.</p>	<p>The Safer Sheffield Partnership will collaborate with victim/survivors of domestic abuse to create awareness raising campaigns about domestic abuse and the support that is available for Sheffield residents.</p>
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<sup>1</sup> Dalton TR, Knipe D, Feder G, et al Prevalence and correlates of domestic violence among people seeking treatment for self-harm: data from a regional self-harm register emergency Medicine Journal 2019;36:407-409.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2215-0366%2822%2900151-1>

