



**South Nottinghamshire  
Community Safety Partnership**

# **Domestic Homicide Review Report**

---

Under s9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act  
2004

Review into the death of Tara  
in October 2016

Report Author: Christine Graham  
September 2020

## Preface

---

South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership wishes at the outset to express their deepest sympathy to Tara's family and friends. This review has been undertaken in order that lessons can be learned.

This review has been undertaken in an open and constructive manner with all the agencies, both voluntary and statutory, engaging positively. This has ensured that we have been able to consider the circumstances of this incident in a meaningful way and address, with candour, the issues that it has raised.

The review was commissioned by South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership on receiving notification of the death of Tara in circumstances which appeared to meet the criteria of Section 9 (3)(a) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.

### A tribute to Tara from her family

Losing a child is a parent's worst nightmare but the way in which we lost Tara makes it even harder to bear or understand. Finding the words to describe the level of loss, the deep sadness and the emptiness is exceptionally difficult.

Tara was born two weeks early. The labour was long and painful, but when I held her in my arms for the first time, I was overwhelmed with love for her. She had lots of dark hair and I lay awake, just looking at her thinking how beautiful she was.

As a toddler she could be a little Miss Mischief sometimes, she loved her nursery school and liked to play Mary in the nativity play. She wanted, from an early age for everything to be "just so", neat and tidy and was very independent. She used to regularly say "mummy I'll do it"!

She tended to keep things to herself, wanting to try and sort them out without bothering me. She was bullied twice at school, I only found out when she was in tears and when the school told me. Her independence sometimes prevented her sharing problems, even though we were incredibly close.

Tara loved and protected her brother and sister and from an early age she was demonstrating a real motherly instinct. As she grew up, she was supportive and loving to her cousins. All these caring attributes really came to the fore when she became a mum herself.

Tara did well at school and wanted to be a mid-wife. Her caring nature and love of children would have served her well in this role. She commenced a college course in Health and Social Care, and volunteered for Home Start, providing support for families with young children who were struggling to cope, again demonstrating her caring, maternal nature. She also volunteered for the Air Ambulance shop in West Bridgford. Her life was beginning again, and she got great satisfaction from helping others, often helping other mothers with both advice and practical assistance.

Thankfully we have been left her three precious children and believe me she will always live on in them. They have inherited many of their mother's qualities, her quirky sense of humour and love of music and dance. It saddens me to the core to know that she missed her daughter's first day at school and the first day at secondary school of one of her sons. There will be so many milestones in their lives that she will not be here to share with them, and this breaks my heart.

My daughter's children were her world she had always kept them spotlessly clean and well dressed. Despite what they witnessed and suffered they have grown in confidence during the period they have been living with us. The older ones are doing better than expected at secondary school and the youngest is described as a ray of sunshine by all the teachers at her school. She is always smiling and makes friends with all the children throughout the school.

Obviously, the amount of time spent with them whilst their mother was alive has helped with their transition to living with us but that also makes it difficult as it does remind us

of those many, many times we shared together. It is so sad that the memories of the last holiday we shared, one of the best two weeks ever, should be tainted by what happened on our return.

We, the family, have been handed a life sentence of unbearable grief and there are no words that come close to the impact her death and the circumstances surrounding it have had on our family. No mother, father, brother, sister or child should have to experience this.

The emotional and physical pain I feel is incredible and unimaginable, I find it difficult to talk about my grandchildren's mother, my daughter in the past tense. I feel broken. Part of me feels I cannot be happy, the pain in my stomach is constant, it is the most painful feeling I have ever felt. It's an agonising pain in my stomach, It's sleepless nights. It's mental and physical exhaustion. It's nightmares, sleeping pills and anti-depressants.

Hindsight is a torture, my daughter's death should have been preventable, and I am constantly going over things in my head, as I lie awake at night, different visions and outcomes playing over and over again. People tell me that I could not have prevented this awful tragedy, but as a mother I cannot accept this and will always think differently.

Tara wasn't just my daughter she was also my best friend; I love her so much and I will miss her forever.

This Overview Report has been compiled as follows:

**Section 1** will begin with an **introduction to the circumstances** that led to the commission of this review and the process and timescales of the review.

**Section 2** of this report will **set out the facts** in this case, **including a chronology** to assist the reader in understanding how events unfolded that led to Tara's death.

**Section 3** will provide **overview and analysis**.

**Section 4** will analyse the **other issues** considered by this review

**Section 5** will bring together **the lessons learned**, and **Section 6** will collate the **recommendations that arise**.

**Section 7** will bring together **the conclusions** of the Review Panel.

**Appendix One** provides the **terms of reference** against which the panel operated.

Appendix Two details the **ongoing professional development** of the Chair and Report Author.

Where the review has identified that an opportunity to intervene has been missed, this has been noted in a text box. Examples of good practice are set out in italics.

## Contents

---

<b>Preface</b>	2
A tribute to Tara from her family	3
<b>Section One – Introduction</b>	
1.1 <a href="#"><u>Summary of Circumstances leading to the Review</u></a>	8
1.2 <a href="#"><u>Reason for conducting the Review</u></a>	8
1.3 <a href="#"><u>Process and Timescale for the Review</u></a>	9
1.4 <a href="#"><u>Confidentiality</u></a>	11
1.5 <a href="#"><u>Dissemination</u></a>	11
1.6 <a href="#"><u>Contributors to the Review</u></a>	11
1.7 <a href="#"><u>Engagement with Family and Friends</u></a>	12
1.8 <a href="#"><u>Review Panel</u></a>	13
1.9 <a href="#"><u>Domestic Homicide Review Chair and Overview Report Author</u></a>	14
1.10 <a href="#"><u>Parallel Reviews</u></a>	15
1.11 <a href="#"><u>Equality and Diversity</u></a>	16
<b>Section Two – The Facts</b>	
2.1 <a href="#"><u>Introduction</u></a>	17
2.2 <a href="#"><u>Detailed Chronology</u></a>	17
<b>Section Three – Overview and Analysis</b>	
3.1 <a href="#"><u>Information provided by family and friends</u></a>	27
3.2 <a href="#"><u>Evidence of domestic abuse</u></a>	27
3.3 <a href="#"><u>Detailed analysis of Agency Involvement</u></a>	34
<b>Section Four – Analysis</b>	
4.1 <a href="#"><u>Tara’s vulnerability and how she was targeted by Marcus</u></a>	52
4.2 <a href="#"><u>The last few weeks of Tara’s life</u></a>	55

4.3	<a href="#"><u>The use of drugs and alcohol</u></a>	57
4.4	<a href="#"><u>The impact of the domestic abuse on children</u></a>	59
4.5	<a href="#"><u>What were the barriers to Tara leaving Marcus?</u></a>	60
	<b><a href="#"><u>Section Five – Lessons Learned</u></a></b>	63
	<b><a href="#"><u>Section Six – Recommendations</u></a></b>	64
	<b><a href="#"><u>Section Seven – Conclusions</u></a></b>	65
	<b><a href="#"><u>Appendix One – Terms of Reference</u></a></b>	66
	<b><a href="#"><u>Appendix Two – Ongoing professional development of Chair and Report Author</u></a></b>	69

## Section One – Introduction

### 1.1 Summary of Circumstances leading to the Review

---

- 1.1.1 During the early hours of a Tuesday in October 2016, Tara’s partner took their children to his sister’s home before going to the police station where he told an officer that he thought he had killed his girlfriend. He was arrested and police went to the home.
- 1.1.2 When they arrived, they found Tara had been severely beaten and was dead in the house. A murder investigation was commenced.
- 1.1.3 A post-mortem was conducted and thirty-seven external injuries together with six internal injuries were recorded. These are summarised as:
- Extensive bruising to her body including bruises to her face, left breast, front of her upper abdomen, inner and outer aspects of her legs, inner and outer aspects of her arms, front and back of her left shoulder, back of her right hand and fingers and the back of her left wrist and fingers, her back and buttocks
  - Abrasions to her face
  - Full thickness lacerations to her forehead, top of her head, back of head and bruising underlying the scalp injuries
  - A torn upper frenulum
  - Five fractured ribs
  - A punctured lung
- 1.1.4 The conclusion of the post-mortem was that these horrific injuries were not enough to kill her, but that the amount of cocaine in Tara’s system was enough to kill her: the cause of death was recorded as cocaine toxicity. This review will return to discuss this in more detail later within this report.
- 1.1.5 Given the findings of the post-mortem, it was considered that there was not sufficient evidence to charge Tara’s partner with causing her death. He was, therefore, charged with intentionally causing her grievous bodily harm. He pleaded not guilty to this charge, but at his trial in February 2018, he was found guilty. He was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment with a further licence period of three years.

### 1.2 Reasons for conducting the Review

---

- 1.2.1 This Domestic Homicide Review is carried out in accordance with the statutory requirement set out in Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004.
- 1.2.2 The review must, according to the Act, 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’.

1.2.3 In this case, the victim was an intimate partner of the perpetrator, therefore, the criteria have been met.

1.2.4 The purpose of the DHR is to:

- 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
- Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result
- Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate
- Prevent domestic violence and homicide and improve service responses to 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 possible opportunity
- Contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic violence and abuse
- Highlight good practice

## 1.3 Methodology and Timescales for the Review

---

1.3.1 On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2017, a meeting was held to determine whether a Domestic Homicide Review should be held. Investigators were concerned as the Home Office pathologist was of the view that Tara had not died as a result of homicide. A Domestic Homicide Review and a Safeguarding Adults Review (SAR) were considered but it was agreed that the criteria were not met for either. This decision was then ratified at the SAR sub-group meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017.

1.3.2 On 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017, South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) received an email from AAFDA<sup>1</sup> asking if a Domestic Homicide Review had been commissioned in respect of Tara’s death. This led to the latest amendments to the Home Office guidance being consulted, specifically that there was no longer a requirement for a homicide to have taken place in order for there to be a Domestic Homicide Review.

---

<sup>1</sup> Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse

- 1.3.3 Enquiries were made of Nottinghamshire Police and on 18<sup>th</sup> September an outline of what had happened to Tara was sent, along with a request that the CSP consider commissioning a Domestic Homicide Review.
- 1.3.4 On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017, the CSP agreed that a Domestic Homicide Review was required and that an Independent Chair and Report Author would be commissioned. The Home Office were also notified of the decision. The review notes that this was within one month of the notification as required within the statutory guidance.
- 1.3.5 The review then commenced in December 2017.
- 1.3.6 The first panel meeting was held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017. The panel met on three further occasions, with the last meeting being on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2018.
- 1.3.7 Individual Management Reviews and chronologies were then commissioned from:
- Children’s Social Care – Nottinghamshire County Council
  - Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Group – on behalf of GP
  - Metropolitan Housing
  - NHS Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Group – on behalf of GP
  - Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
  - Nottinghamshire Police
  - Women’s Aid Integrated Services
- 1.3.8 The Overview Report was considered by the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Following this meeting, it was suggested to the Community Safety Partnership that a new Chair and Report Author be appointed to rewrite the report.
- 1.3.9 In February 2020, Gary Goose and Christine Graham were appointed to undertake this role. They decided to redraft the report rather than make amendments to the original report submitted.
- 1.3.10 The IMRs and chronologies were provided, along with the original report. The sentencing remarks of the trial, transcript of the coroner’s summing up, and conclusion of the fact-finding hearing held in the Family Court, have also been used as source documents. Some further enquiries were made in order that the rewrite could be drafted.
- 1.3.11 Unfortunately, arrangements made to meet the family coincided with the Coronavirus lockdown. In June 2020, an online meeting was held, and the review progressed in light of this meeting.
- 1.3.12 Tara’s family had a copy of the draft report to consider in their own time with the support of their AAFDA advocate. The Chair and Report Author met with Tara’s family in order to discuss their feedback. Additional enquiries and revisions were made in light of these discussions. The final version was

largely agreed by Tara's family. Any areas of continued disagreement are noted within this report.

1.3.13 The review was not completed within six months due to the reasons set out above.

## 1.4 Confidentiality

---

1.4.1 The content and findings of this review are held to be confidential, with information available only to those participating officers and professionals and, where necessary, their appropriate organisational management. It will remain confidential until such time as the review has been approved for publication by the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel.

1.4.2 Tara's family has specifically requested that her name is used rather than assigning a pseudonym.

1.4.3 Tara's partner will be referred to as Marcus.

1.4.4 Other partners of Marcus will be referred to as Angie, Bernie and Charis.

1.4.5 The male with whom Tara had a historic relationship is referred to as Neil.

## 1.5 Dissemination

---

1.5.1 The following individuals/organisations will receive copies of this report:

- Tara's family
- Police and Crime Commissioner for Nottinghamshire
- Offender Managers from HM Prison and Probation Service (in relation to Tara's partner)
- Children's Social Care – Nottinghamshire County Council
- Greater Nottingham Clinical Commissioning Group – on behalf of GP
- Metropolitan Housing
- NHS Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Group – on behalf of GP
- Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
- Nottinghamshire Police
- Women's Aid Integrated Services

## 1.6 Contributors to the Review

---

1.6.1 Those contributing to the review do so under Section 2(4) of the statutory guidance for the conduct of DHRs and it is the duty of any person or body participating in the review to have regard for the guidance.

1.6.2 All panel meetings took specific note of the statutory guidance as the overriding source of reference for the review. Any individual interviewed by

this Chair or Report Author, or other body with whom they sought to consult, were made aware of the aims of the Domestic Homicide Review and pointed to the statutory guidance.

- 1.6.3 However, it should be noted that whilst a person or body can be directed to participate, the Chair and the DHR Review Panel do not have the power or legal sanction to compel their co-operation, either by attendance at the panel or meeting for an interview.
- 1.6.4 The following agencies contributed to the review:
- NHS Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group – on behalf of GP
  - NHS Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Group – on behalf of GP
  - Nottinghamshire County Council – Children’s Social Care
  - Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
  - Nottinghamshire Police
  - Rushcliffe Borough Council
  - Women’s Aid Integrated Services
- 1.6.5 The previous Chair wrote to Marcus to explain about the Domestic Homicide Review and inviting him to engage, but he did not respond.<sup>2</sup>
- 1.6.6 There are three previous partners of Marcus that the review is aware of. The previous Chair tried to contact each one by telephone, without success, therefore he wrote to each of them inviting them to participate in the review: none of them responded. The Report Author feels that it might have been preferable for an introduction to be made by the police who already had been in contact with the women in question.

## 1.7 Engagement with Family and Friends

---

- 1.7.1 Tara’s mother and stepfather have participated in the review, supported by an advocate from AAFDA, and have had a copy of the report to read in their own time.
- 1.7.2 Tara’s birth father was spoken to by the previous Review Chair and was provided with a copy of the Home Office leaflet<sup>3</sup>. He said that he would contact the Chair if he wished to engage in the review: no contact was received.
- 1.7.3 Two of Tara’s friends met with the previous Chair.
- 1.7.4 The Home Office Quality Assurance Panel were advised, through the AAFDA advocate, that there was a significant breakdown in trust between the family and the initial DHR Chair resulting in the family having a negative experience of the DHR process. The panel was of the view that best practice was not

---

<sup>2</sup> It is not known how this approach was made.

<sup>3</sup> It is not known if he was provided details of agencies that could provide him with support through the process.

followed by the Chair in this instance and recommended that a new Chair should work to rebuild the trust with the family.

- 1.7.5 As soon as appointed, the Report Author made contact with the AAFDA advocate and they met to discuss the case, and how this trust could be rebuilt.
- 1.7.6 Following a delay caused by the Covid-19 lockdown, an online meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020. Present at this meeting were Tara’s mother and stepfather, their AAFDA advocate, the Chair and Report Author. At this meeting, the Chair and Report Author explained the work that they had done to date and how they planned to proceed. Tara’s family talked about her and explained the issues that were important for them that the review should address.
- 1.7.7 Tara’s mother and stepfather met with the panel virtually on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020. They asked specific questions of Nottinghamshire Police and Children’s Social Care. These are addressed at the end of the section dealing with each agency’s involvement.
- 1.7.8 A copy of the draft report was given to Tara’s mother and stepfather to read in their own time, supported by their AAFDA advocate. After they had read the report, the family returned their comments and the Chair and Report Author met with them to discuss their feedback in detail. Following further investigation and edits, the report was agreed with Tara’s family. Any areas of continuing disagreement are noted within this report.

**Tara’s family stress that they disagree with this view and wish the DHR to be aware that Marcus’ mother did not engage with the Family Court proceedings and that evidence shows that she was aware of her son’s involvement with drugs and his intention to take the children from Tara.**

## 1.8 Review Panel

---

- 1.8.1 The members of the original Review Panel<sup>4</sup> were:

Name	Organisation
Tony Webster	EMSOU
Rhonda Christian	NHS Nottingham CCG
Jean Gregory	NHS Nottinghamshire North and East CCG
Claire Sampson	Nottinghamshire County Council – Children’s Services
Tony Shardlow	Nottinghamshire County Council – Community Safety
Julie Gardner	Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

<sup>4</sup>Due to the time that elapsed, it is not possible to specify the job titles

Leigh Sanders (replaced by Rob Severn)	Nottinghamshire Police
David Banks	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Jennifer Allison	Women's Aid Integrated Services
Rebecca Smith	Women's Aid Integrated Services

- 1.8.2 Given the time that had elapsed, a number of the panel members had moved on or retired. Therefore, a new panel was convened to consider the redrafted report. The members of this panel were:

Name	Title	Organisation
Stuart Prior	Head of Regional Review Unit	EMSOU
Chris Bull	Head of Housing	Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
Nick Judge	Interim Designated Professional for Adult Safeguarding	NHS Nottingham CCG
Claire Sampson	Children's Service Manager Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe District Child Protection Teams	Nottinghamshire County Council – Children's Services
Hannah Hogg	Corporate Safeguarding Lead	Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
Clare Dean	Detective Chief Inspector	Nottinghamshire Police
Geoff Carpenter	Service Manager (Public Protection) – Neighbourhoods	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Rebecca Smith	Head of Services Accommodation and Central Operations	Women's Aid Integrated Services

- 1.8.3 Tara's mother and stepfather had requested to meet the Review Panel, but this had not occurred. On 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020, they met with this newly convened Review Panel, supported by their AAFDA advocate.

## 1.9 Domestic Homicide Review Chair and Overview Report Author

---

- 1.9.1 The Report Author did not feel it was appropriate or professional to add information about the previous Chair.
- 1.9.2 Gary Goose served with Cambridgeshire Constabulary rising to the rank of Detective Chief Inspector: his policing career concluded in 2011. During this

time, as well as leading high- profile investigations, Gary served on the national Family Liaison Executive and led the police response to the families of the Soham murder victims. From 2011, Gary was employed by Peterborough City Council as Head of Community Safety and latterly as Assistant Director for Community Services. The city's domestic abuse support services were amongst the area of Gary's responsibility as well as substance misuse and housing services. Gary concluded his employment with the local authority in October 2016. He was also employed for six months by Cambridgeshire's Police and Crime Commissioner developing a performance framework.

- 1.9.3 Christine Graham worked for the Safer Peterborough Partnership for 13 years managing all aspects of community safety, including domestic abuse services. During this time, Christine's specific area of expertise was partnership working – facilitating the partnership work within Peterborough. Since setting up her own company, Christine has worked with a number of organisations and partnerships to review their practices and policies in relation to community safety and anti-social behaviour. As well as delivering training in relation to tackling anti-social behaviour, Christine has worked with a number of organisations to review their approach to community safety. Christine served for seven years as a Lay Advisor to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough MAPPA, which involved her in observing and auditing Level 2 and 3 meetings as well as engagement in Serious Case Reviews. Christine chairs her local Safer off the Streets Partnership.
- 1.9.4 Gary and Christine have completed, or are currently engaged upon, a number of Domestic Homicide Reviews across the country in the capacity of Chair and Overview Author. Previous Domestic Homicide Reviews have included a variety of different scenarios: male victims; suicide; murder/suicide; familial domestic homicide; a number which involve mental ill health on the part of the offender and/or victim ;and, reviews involving foreign nationals. In several reviews, they have developed good working relationships with parallel investigations/inquiries such as those undertaken by the IOPC, NHS England and Adult Care Reviews.
- 1.9.5 Neither Gary Goose nor Christine Graham are associated with any of the agencies involved in the review nor have, at any point in the past, been associated with any of the agencies.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.9.6 Both Christine and Gary have completed the Home Office online training on Domestic Homicide Reviews, including the additional modules on chairing reviews and producing overview reports. Appendix Two sets out the ongoing professional development of the Chair and Report Author.

## 1.10 Parallel Reviews

---

- 1.10.1 The trial of Tara's partner was held in March 2018.

---

<sup>5</sup> Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews (para 36), Home Office, Dec 2016

- 1.10.2 In July 2018, the Family Court held a Finding of Fact hearing as part of the Care Proceedings to determine the future arrangements for Tara's children.
- 1.10.3 An inquest was held by the coroner and concluded in December 2018.
- 1.10.4 These reports have all been used to draw on when writing this report. Particular attention is paid to the Care Proceedings as in this case the judge heard live evidence from witnesses and therefore this evidence and thus the findings have been tested.

## 1.11 Equality and Diversity

---

1.11.1 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

1.11.2 Women's Aid state '*domestic abuse perpetrated by men against women is a distinct phenomenon rooted in women's unequal status in society and oppressive social constructions of gender and family*'.<sup>6</sup> According to a statement by Refuge, women are more likely than men to be killed by partners/ex-partners, with women making up 73% of all domestic homicides, with four in five of these being killed by a current or former partner<sup>7</sup>. In 2013/14, this was 46% of female homicide victims killed by a partner or ex-partner, compared with 7% of male victims.<sup>8</sup>

1.11.3 The majority of perpetrators of domestic homicides are men – in 2017/18, 87.5% of domestic homicide victims were killed by men<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, in 2017/18, 93% of defendants in domestic abuse cases were men<sup>10</sup> and in

---

<sup>6</sup> (Women's Aid Domestic abuse is a gendered crime, n.d.)

<sup>7</sup> ONS (2018), 'Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2018'. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusefindingsfromthecrimesurveyforenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018#the-long-term-trends-in-domestic-abuse> November 2018.

<sup>8</sup> (Office for National Statistics, Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2013/14 Chapter 2: Violent Crime and Sexual Offences – Homicide, n.d.)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> CPS (2018), 'Violence against women and girls report, 2017-18). September 2018 <https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/cps-vawg-report-2018.pdf>



2017, 468 defendants were prosecuted for coercive and controlling behaviour, of which 454 were men and only nine were women<sup>11</sup>.

1.11.4 Tara was white British, and Marcus is black British.

1.11.5 Tara was 15 years old when she became pregnant and therefore could not have consented to sex with Marcus. The impact of her pregnancy at her age is considered within the body of the report. The review recognised that the approach taken by agencies to her pregnancy at this young age was not as would be the case if it occurred today. The limitations of the interventions at that time is acknowledged in the report and the approach taken if this occurred now is set out.

---

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Justice (2018), 'Statistics on women and the criminal justice system 2017'. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/759770/women-criminal-justice-system-2017..pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/759770/women-criminal-justice-system-2017..pdf) November 2018.

## Section Two – The Facts

### 2.1 Introduction

---

- 2.1.1 Tara's family described how Tara was never her usual bubbly self when she was with Marcus. They said that because of his influence she never lived up to her full potential. Her friends said that she had always been bright, bubbly and friendly but this all changed when she met Marcus. She became withdrawn, private and was 'up and down' in mood especially on the frequent occasions that she and Marcus had fallen out.
- 2.1.2 Tara and Marcus became a couple when she was 15 and he was 20. Tara had her first baby when she was just 16 years old. The couple continued in an 'on-off' relationship up until the time that she died. There was a particularly lengthy separation between 2005 and 2012, when Tara became pregnant, but they remained in contact during this time.
- 2.1.3 A full chronology of events and a summary of information known by family, friends and agencies will follow within this report. Findings of Fact from the Family Court hearing is also included in the chronology. The chronology includes some incidents outside the scope of the review that are relevant to the review, particularly in helping us to understand the 'on-off' nature of the relationship between Tara and Marcus.

### 2.2 Detailed Chronology

---

#### 2.2.1 2002

- 2.2.2 Tara was a 14-year-old girl doing well at school and with no difficulties at home. She was a sensitive girl who was very family orientated and loved to be at home. She had a place at college to study childcare.

#### 2.2.3 2003

- 2.2.4 At the age of 15, Tara met Marcus who was 20 years of age. He was her first boyfriend.

- 2.2.5 In October, Tara gave birth to her first child.

#### 2.2.6 2005

- 2.2.7 Tara's grandmother and uncle attended her home and found her upset. Tara told her grandmother that Marcus had kicked her in the stomach when she was pregnant and holding her child. She was worried that she would lose the baby.

- 2.2.8 In September, Tara gave birth to her second child. Marcus says that they separated a week later and remained separated until 2012. However, Tara's family maintain that the relationship was 'on-off' throughout this time.

**2.2.9 2006**

2.2.10 In or about February, Marcus assaulted Tara causing matching bruising on her upper arms on both sides.

2.2.11 In April, the police contacted Children's Social Care (CSC) as they had attended a domestic incident at Tara's address on 16<sup>th</sup> April involving Tara and Marcus. There had been an argument when Marcus had come to collect the children for contact. He had kicked down the door, started pushing her around the house and grabbed her head and pushed it into the wall. She said that he threw her to the floor and when she tried to call the police, he took the phone from her and threw it outside. She said that he then repeatedly grabbed her, pushed her to the floor and punched her in the face. She said this assault lasted 10 minutes. Subsequent examination showed reddening to her neck. This took place in front of the children. At the time, Marcus' whereabouts was unknown, and Tara made a statement to the police. As the couple were separated, no action was taken by CSC.

2.2.12 At Christmas, Tara was at her parents' property when Marcus came to the house and screamed and shouted outside the back door. When Tara's mother opened the door, Marcus pushed her, causing her glasses to fall off.

**2.2.13 2007**

2.2.14 At some point in the year, Tara and Marcus were engaged in court proceedings with respect of child contact.

2.2.15 During the year, Marcus had a child with another woman.

2.2.16 On 28<sup>th</sup> July, the police attended after Tara had alleged that Marcus had assaulted her. She was noted to have injuries, with a slight reddening to the lower right side of her neck, bruising on her upper left and upper right arm, and a bruise on her lower right arm.

2.2.17 In October, a referral was made to CSC after the police had been called by Tara on 7<sup>th</sup> October. Tara had phoned Marcus and they argued over the phone. He had then turned up at the property and was kicking the door and causing a disturbance. Tara had refused to open the door due to the previous violence and he left when the police arrived. As CSC considered that Tara had acted appropriately to protect her children and remained separated from Marcus, no further action was taken.

2.2.18 The police made a second referral to CSC in December following an incident when Tara contacted the police as Marcus had not returned the children after contact. The police visited Marcus' home and found the children safe and well. This was considered, by CSC, as a matter for the couple to resolve through the courts if necessary.

- 2.2.19 Following this incident, Family Court proceedings began, with Marcus seeking to secure custody of the children by claiming that Tara was taking drugs. This was dismissed by the court and, following proceedings including CAFCASS, custody was awarded to Tara and formal contact arrangements for Marcus were made.
- 2.2.20 Tara visited her mother's home at some point in 2007. She broke down and showed her a black eye and bruising to her bicep. She said that Marcus had hit her, and she was very upset. Marcus then came to the property and banged on the door and behaved in an aggressive manner. *Tara's mother says that this is the last time that Tara told her that Marcus had been violent to her.*
- 2.2.21 **2008**
- 2.2.22 The arrangement with Marcus for handover of the children for contact was that it should be done outside West Bridgford Police Station, but Marcus insisted that Tara met him outside the ambulance station (around the corner). On one occasion, there was an incident between Tara and Marcus's partner at the time, which resulted in Tara being arrested. Following CPS advice, no further action was taken.
- 2.2.23 The family has since discovered in legal documents that Tara told her solicitor that, following this, the police advised her to carry out the handover *inside* the police station for her own safety<sup>12</sup>.
- 2.2.24 **2009**
- 2.2.25 At some point in this year, Marcus grabbed Tara by her hair and threw her around in front of their eldest child.
- 2.2.26 **May 2010**
- 2.2.27 Tara attended A&E because she had fallen on the stairs at home and had injured her shoulder. Her injury matched her description of the incident and staff had no concerns or suspicion that domestic abuse may have been a factor.
- 2.2.28 **2011**
- 2.2.29 On 6<sup>th</sup> May, Tara attended the GP with a health concern and told her GP that she had been in a stable relationship for the past year.
- 2.2.30 During a domestic incident on 12<sup>th</sup> June, it is alleged that Marcus punched his then partner. Angie who he had been with for 15 months, inflicting a facial injury. The next morning, he left the property with the door keys and Angie called the police. When she was seen by officers, her facial injury was noted but she was reluctant to say how this had happened.

---

<sup>12</sup> This does not appear in police records.

- 2.2.31 Marcus was arrested for assault but denied causing the injury to Angie. He was released on bail with conditions while further investigations were undertaken. She did not feel able to pursue the complaint and, as there was insufficient evidence, he was released without charge. The risk level was assessed as MEDIUM and over the coming months Angie was visited by local officers. She said that she had no further problems with Marcus.
- 2.2.32 A few days later, on 17<sup>th</sup> June, Angie reported an altercation that had occurred over the telephone between her and Marcus. At this time, Marcus had bail conditions not to contact Angie. The police established that she had instigated the contact by telephoning him over the return of property and there was no further action taken.
- 2.2.33 On 14<sup>th</sup> August, Tara and Marcus had an argument over the telephone regarding the issue of access to their children and the ending of their relationship. At the time of the call, Tara was outside the home of Bernie where she had gone to collect her children who were staying with Marcus. Tara had received messages from Marcus saying she was not getting the children back. She was reportedly under the influence of alcohol. It was established, by the police, that there was a court order in place that allowed Marcus to have custody of the children overnight from Sunday to Monday. The children were returned to Tara the next day without incident. No offences were recorded, and the incident was recorded as a domestic incident and the risk was identified as STANDARD.
- 2.2.34 On 1<sup>st</sup> September, a MARAC referral was received for Angie. Contact was attempted but was unsuccessful.
- 2.2.35 Telephone contact was made with Angie by Women's Aid on 6<sup>th</sup> September. The IDVA<sup>13</sup> service was explained to her. Safety planning was discussed, and a support plan was created. Angie requested support with making a homeless application to another town. The IDVA agreed to make the request for a supporting letter at the MARAC meeting.
- 2.2.36 On 8<sup>th</sup> September, the MARAC meeting was held, and it was agreed to provide a letter of support to Angie.
- 2.2.37 On 15<sup>th</sup> September, the letter of support was received and this letter, along with the letter from Women's Aid, were sent to Angie.
- 2.2.38 Angie was spoken to on the telephone on 20<sup>th</sup> September and she confirmed that she had received the support letters. She said that she had not seen Marcus and was still intending to return to the other town. It was agreed that she needed no further support, the helpline number was left with her, and the case was closed.

---

<sup>13</sup> Independent Domestic Violence Advocate

2.2.39 In November, police dealt with an incident between Marcus and Angie. The attending officer graded this incident as STANDARD risk. When reviewed by a specialist Sergeant, it was regraded to MEDIUM. The family provided evidence from police records that, following this incident, a PC expressed his concern about the incident being assessed as MEDIUM, as he felt it should have been graded 'high risk overall and put her at risk of serious violence from Marcus'.<sup>14</sup>

2.2.40 **2012**

2.2.41 On 23<sup>rd</sup> February, Tara attended the GP. When asked about her family, she said that she had been with the same partner for a while.

2.2.42 Marcus says that at some point during the year, they 'drifted back into a relationship'<sup>15</sup>.

2.2.43 On 13<sup>th</sup> May, Tara and Marcus were customers together at a public house. The group they were with were asked to leave by the female licensee. Tara threw a drink over the licensee. Marcus went to the private side of the bar and allegedly pushed the licensee in the chest, causing her to fall to the ground. They left the premises before the police arrived.

2.2.44 During the police investigation, Tara and Marcus were identified as being involved. Tara was interviewed and admitted throwing the drink. She was issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for a public order offence.

2.2.45 Marcus was interviewed and admitted pushing the licensee over. He claimed he had acted in self-defence. He was reported for summons for Common Assault, but ultimately no action was taken.

2.2.46 Prior to September, Marcus beat up Tara over the course of an hour by punching her in her side and kicking her, causing bruising to the left side of her body.

2.2.47 On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, Tara saw her GP during her pregnancy and she stated that she was in a stable relationship.

2.2.48 **2013**

2.2.49 On 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013, Tara was seen by her GP and he recorded that she looked well.

2.2.50 In July, Tara gave birth to her third child.

---

<sup>14</sup> Police records are unable to verify this view of the PC and this review has not sought to have the officer spoken to about a conversation that occurred ten years ago.

<sup>15</sup> Direct quote taken from the Family Court hearing.

- 2.2.51 Marcus was at a house-party on 6<sup>th</sup> October and it is alleged that he assaulted a female, Adult C, outside the address causing bruising to her forehead. Officers were alerted to the disturbance whilst patrolling in the area and arrested Marcus. He denied being responsible for the assault, stating that he had stopped Adult C from assaulting someone else and that he had received a cut lip.
- 2.2.52 Adult C did not feel able to make a statement or provide any assistance with the investigation. She said that she was not in a relationship with Marcus. In the absence of CCTV and any witnesses, there was insufficient evidence for a case to proceed and he was released without charge.
- 2.2.53 **2014**
- 2.2.54 In March, Tara registered her family with Surestart, but did not subsequently access the service.
- 2.2.55 On 13<sup>th</sup> May, Tara reported a verbal altercation with her partner, Marcus, at her home address. When officers arrived, Marcus was confrontational with them. As no injuries or assaults had occurred, he was removed to a friend's address to prevent a breach of the peace.
- 2.2.56 The children were all present at the address and DASH risk assessments were completed with Tara. It was classified as a domestic incident where there had been a verbal argument. The level of risk was classified as MEDIUM and the assessment was submitted to the Domestic Abuse Support Unit (DASU). The risk assessor submitted the DASH report to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) after endorsing the risk assessment.
- 2.2.57 On 15<sup>th</sup> May, a MASH domestic abuse meeting was held, and it was agreed that:
- A MASH enquiry would take place to gather all the relevant information regarding the children
  - The MEDIUM risk assessment would remain in place
  - Children's Social Care (CSC) would make contact with Tara
  - The information held by the police would be shared with CSC

**The review is aware that Tara's landlord (a Registered Social Landlord) was not invited to this meeting or told of the incident. The review is assured that, in the time that has elapsed, information sharing is now much improved but feels it is important for those holding these meetings to ensure that RSLs are invited.**

- 2.2.58 On 15<sup>th</sup> May, the decision was taken to undertake an Initial Assessment. Due to the previous referrals, the threshold was met. However, the assessment concluded that the current and historic domestic abuse did not meet the threshold for continued CSC involvement.
- 2.2.59 On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, Tara was referred by her GP to the Burns Unit at Nottingham City Hospital due to oil splashes on her right forearm. She had been cooking mushrooms in a frying pan when hot oil had splashed on to her forearm and

hand. There was no suspicion of domestic abuse because her description of the incident matched with the pattern of burns.

**2.2.60 2015**

2.2.61 In March, Marcus began a relationship with another woman and moved in with her in April.

2.2.62 In September 2015, Marcus returned to live with Tara.

**2.2.63 2016**

2.2.64 At some point in 2016, another woman became pregnant by Marcus: she told Tara that Marcus intended to leave the family to be with her.

**2.2.65 Between June and October**

2.2.66 The children were exposed to an escalation in Marcus's controlling and abusive behaviour towards Tara. During this time, there were repeated arguments about Tara's relationship with Neil. These arguments were heard by the children, who were required to spend long periods upstairs.

2.2.67 Marcus assaulted Tara to such an extent that he caused fractures to her ribs. Photos found on Tara's camera showed bruising to Tara's neck consistent with hands being held around her throat.

2.2.68 On 23<sup>rd</sup> July, a friend saw Tara at the swimming pool and described that she 'appeared to be very anxious and out of character', rushing the children away to get changed and home. Her friend saw her again on 30<sup>th</sup> July, when she appeared anxious.

2.2.69 Tara's mother and stepfather saw her and Marcus at the Willow Tree having a drink on 30<sup>th</sup> July. After a brief chat, they sat at separate tables because Marcus did not like dogs (and they had their dog with them). Whilst returning from the toilets to the garden where they were sitting, Tara's mother was met by Tara going in the opposite direction. Tara put her arm around her mum and said, 'love you mum'.

2.2.70 In early August, Tara telephoned her mother and was hysterical saying that Marcus was going to take the children away. Her mother could hear Marcus in the background shouting, 'what are you feeling fucking sorry for. It's me you should be sorry for'.

2.2.71 Marcus assaulted Tara and caused bruising to her: this was witnessed by the children.

2.2.72 On 1<sup>st</sup> August, Marcus's mother reported him as a missing person. She said he had last been seen on 27<sup>th</sup> July. He was recorded as a missing person on



COMPACT<sup>16</sup> and enquiries were made to locate him. Within the report, it was recorded that Marcus was seeing a female and her boyfriend was seeking him out, with this being a potential reason for him being missing.

- 2.2.73 However, at 10.30 pm on 1<sup>st</sup> August, Tara's mother received a call from a relative saying that Marcus's father was worried about him as he was reported as missing. She said that they had seen them in the Willow Tree the day before, so he was not missing as he was at Tara's address. Tara's stepfather then called the house and confirmed that Marcus was there.
- 2.2.74 On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Marcus was located safe and well at Tara's address. He said that he had been sleeping rough in his car for a few days. Tara's family are clear that he had been living at Tara's address since September 2015 and although he parked his car away from the house so that he could not be traced, he had not been sleeping rough.
- 2.2.75 Tara's mother contacted the police on 2<sup>nd</sup> August to report that she was concerned for the safety of Tara and her children from Marcus. She said that Tara had been acting out of character recently and she may be in a bad domestic situation. Officers visited the address and carried out a welfare check on Tara. She was found to be safe and well and reported no domestic incidents or abuse<sup>17</sup>. The children were not seen during this visit and her mother was updated accordingly.
- 2.2.76 On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Marcus told Tara's mother that Tara was depressed and that she just wanted him and did not want to see other people. Tara's mother was surprised as she saw no sign of depression when they had met a couple of days earlier so told Marcus to take Tara to the GP if she was depressed. He responded that he would 'sort her out'.
- 2.2.77 A friend invited Tara and her family to her home on 24<sup>th</sup> August. She said that Marcus put Tara down and was critical of her family.
- 2.2.78 On 21<sup>st</sup> September, Tara's friend saw her and Tara asked to borrow her phone so that she could text her bank details to Marcus.
- 2.2.79 On a day, most likely to be at the end of September, Marcus assaulted Tara to such an extent that he caused serious injury to her arm. Medical assistance was not sought, and her arm was treated with a 'cast' purchased from the internet: it remained painful until the date she died.
- 2.2.80 In October, Tara was seen by her grandmother crouched on the bed on all fours (on her hands and knees), with the left side of her face down on the pillow. She told her grandmother she had an ear infection, and she was too weak to go to the doctors. Her grandmother told Marcus that Tara needed to

---

<sup>16</sup> This is the Nottinghamshire Police Missing Person investigation and recording system. It records persons reported missing, assessment of risk and the investigative actions/tasks undertaken during the investigation.

<sup>17</sup> The officer who attended was spoken to by the original Chair and although he had very little recollection of the incident due to the passage of time, he has said that, under the circumstances he would have spoken to Tara alone. He said that if he had any concerns at all for the children, he would have put the appropriate safeguarding measures in place and put in a referral to CSC.

see a doctor and gave him a telephone number. There is no evidence that he took her for medical treatment.

- 2.2.81 From 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> October, the children were present in the family home when Marcus committed a sustained assault on Tara. They heard shouting, Tara screaming, and Tara being assaulted by Marcus. Tara died at her home.

## Section 3 – Overview and Analysis

### 3.1 Information provided by family and friends

---

- 3.1.1 Tara was described as a loving daughter who, from an early age, wanted everything to be 'just so'. She was neat, tidy and independent. She demonstrated throughout her childhood caring characteristics and as she grew older, she got great satisfaction from helping others.
- 3.1.2 Tara was a sensitive woman, who liked to please people and do her best at whatever she engaged in. One woman who had known her for a few years, having met her through a friend who knew Marcus, described Tara as 'lovely, easy going, genuine and a nice girl' and they had clicked the first time they met.
- 3.1.3 Tara was a lovely mum who loved her children very much. She would say that all she wanted was for them to be part of a loving family unit. It was clear to family members that the children all adored her. Neil said she was 'all for her kids'. Tara's family asked three specific questions of Nottinghamshire Police, which are answered in the section that deals with their involvement.

### 3.2 Evidence of domestic abuse

---

- 3.2.1 In this section of the report, the review will explore the evidence that we have that there was a trail of domestic abuse in the relationship between Tara and her partner. This section will consider the misogynistic and controlling behaviour displayed by him and will draw on information provided by family and information that was disclosed to agencies, as well as information that was tested in the Family Court hearing.
- 3.2.2 Tara and her partner had what many have described as an 'on-off' relationship. He moved out of the family home on numerous occasions throughout the years that they were together. He had relationships with other women throughout the time of their relationship. The judge in sentencing said, 'What is beyond question is that Tara's relationship with you was bad for her'.
- 3.2.3 **How the relationship began**
- 3.2.4 In 2002, Tara was a 14-year-old girl, described by her family as doing well at school and with no difficulties at home.
- 3.2.5 At the age of 15, Tara met Marcus who was 20 years of age. Her mother describes her as not being 'wordly wise' and he was 'edgy'. They met when he was seeing one of her friends. It is thought that Tara liked the attention of an older man and was possibly looking for an older male role model. Tara's mum said that, at this time, she began to act in ways that were hitherto out of character.
- 3.2.6 Tara became pregnant at the age of 15, four months after they had met, and gave birth in 2003, when she was 16. This will be discussed in more detail

later in the report. She then went on to have two further children in 2005 and 2013 respectively.

### 3.2.7 **Coercion and control**

- 3.2.8 Controlling and coercive behaviour<sup>18</sup> is a form of domestic abuse that involves the micro-regulation of everyday behaviours. It is a pattern of behaviour designed to make sure that someone complies with the demands of the abuser. Coercive control has been described as creating an atmosphere where the victim is 'walking on eggshells'. The moods and demands of the abuser dominate the relationship. The law on coercive control was introduced in 2015 and enables charges to be brought in cases where there is evidence of repeated controlling or coercive behaviour.
- 3.2.9 The abuse had gone on for so long that the whole family, including the children, were used to covering up the problems and they all knew the things to avoid saying and doing that would upset Marcus.
- 3.2.10 The cumulative effects of coercive control can be devastating. Often the victim will feel that they are to blame. Later in the report, we will discuss how the relationship between Tara and Marcus began and how this control was set up. What we can see, from the evidence available, is how it was manifested in the later years of the relationship.
- 3.2.11 The judge, in his sentencing remarks, said that there was evidence that Marcus 'domineered, controlled and bullied Tara' and that to him this was 'crystal clear'.
- 3.2.12 Tara's child described Marcus as being 'controlling', saying that his father 'wanted things done his way' and did not 'allow his mother to do things on her own'. The person who interviewed the children for the Care Proceedings considered that it was clear that Tara's child attributed the entire responsibility for the arguments to his father.
- 3.2.13 Her friends described how Marcus did not like Tara to go out without him. When he was working as a barman, he would insist that she went there to be with him. When she arrived, he would flirt with another woman behind the bar, just to embarrass or belittle Tara.
- 3.2.14 Tara would not say a bad word against Marcus and explained away her bruising and withdrawn state to her family, friends and children. In contrast, he blamed her for everything. In evidence to the Family Court, he contended that she was responsible for his numerous infidelities as she had driven him to this by not making herself available to him.

---

<sup>18</sup> Monckton-Smith, Jane (2017) *DART Domestic Abuse Reference Tool*. [Software]

- 3.2.15 Tara's family all described her being more withdrawn when she was with Marcus (when the couple were together) to the extent that they considered Marcus to be very controlling of her.
- 3.2.16 We know that Marcus had, on at least one occasion, been through Tara's phone to search for material that she might be hiding from him. This was how he found out about the relationship that Tara had with Neil.
- 3.2.17 Tara's family have made the review aware that he did not acknowledge Tara in his social media profile. There was nothing in this profile and activity to suggest that he and Tara were together.
- 3.2.18 The previous report contained a recommendation that the Community Safety Partnership worked to raise awareness of coercive and controlling behaviour. In particular, the emphasis should be given to recognising what constitutes coercive control, providing practical advice to anyone who has a suspicion that either they or someone they know may be a victim of controlling or coercive behaviour, including the signs that they should look out for and where a victim can go for help.
- 3.2.19 Since the completion of that report, the Community Safety Partnership has commissioned training, delivered by Equation, that sets out the offence of controlling and coercive behaviour and helps practitioners to identify the signs that they should look for. The training was delivered to the three local authorities in the South Nottinghamshire area. All staff receive adult safeguarding training every two years, and this has been updated to include coercive control.

### **Recommendation One**

**It is recommended that that the Community Safety Partnership ensures that this training is provided to all new staff in the local authority and that the provision of the training is extended to cover all agencies within the Community Safety Partnership.**

#### **3.2.20 Tara was frightened of Marcus**

- 3.2.21 When Tara completed a DASH risk assessment in June 2011, she told police that she was frightened of his anger.
- 3.2.22 On 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014, the police were called, and Tara again completed a DASH risk assessment. As part of this process, she said that 'I am frightened that Marcus will return and hurt me'. She also described his behaviour as 'very controlling'.
- 3.2.23 On an occasion when a friend held a birthday party for Tara, Marcus did not arrive at the party until midnight (although it had started at 6pm). She said that when he arrived, Tara went quiet, although she had been dancing and enjoying herself prior to his arrival.

**3.2.24 He took away her autonomy and fighting spirit**

3.2.25 Tara had always wanted to be a midwife and during one of their many separations, she began to study for this, but she gave it up when they were reunited. Marcus demonstrated his need to assert his own power and control by suppressing her ability to develop. This is a sign of coercion and control that is often seen: the victim has her own identity stripped away.

3.2.26 On one occasion, when Tara told her friend about a beating that she had received from Marcus, she said that 'she just took the blows'.

**3.2.27 He used her when it suited him**

3.2.28 We know that Marcus had many intimate relationships with other women – including during the times when he was with Tara. When Tara was pregnant with their second child, he would come to the house with a 'friend' (a woman he worked with). He lied to Tara and told her that she was just a 'friend' and she believed him.

3.2.29 We know that in August 2016 he was seeing another woman whilst living with Tara, as his mother reported him missing believing that he was hiding out from a woman's boyfriend. He had, in fact, been living with Tara since September 2015, and again was engaged in another relationship.

3.2.30 These, once again, demonstrated his willingness to engage in relationships with other women whilst living with Tara as a family.

**3.2.31 He would involve the children**

3.2.32 The children suffered prolonged exposure to their father's physical and verbal abuse towards their mother.

3.2.33 Between June 2016 and October 2016, the children were exposed to an escalation in the perpetrator's controlling and abusive behaviour towards Tara.

3.2.34 Marcus would involve the children in arguments between himself and Tara and confronted Tara about adult issues in front of the children. He would speak to the children in a negative way about Tara's family.

3.2.35 The Family Court was told that he had referred to one of his children as 'gay' and, after the child had reacted to this by slamming the door, Marcus had pinned the child against the door by his shoulders.

3.2.36 Marcus took no parental responsibility for the children. If they had an activity whilst they were visiting him, such as a party, Tara was expected to go and collect them and take them to the activity, bringing them back to him when it was finished. He did not play with the children; they had not played football until they moved to live with their grandparents.

**3.2.37 Isolation**

- 3.2.38 Marcus isolated Tara from anyone who would challenge her situation or would tell her that she did not have to put up with his abuse.
- 3.2.39 Tara increasingly cut herself off from her family and friends. One friend described how she had seen Tara in town and shouted 'hello'. Tara then ushered the children away without speaking to her.
- 3.2.40 After the holiday in June, Tara's family were so concerned about her isolation from them that Tara's mum not only phoned the police with her concerns, but she texted Tara's friend expressing her concerns that Marcus was keeping Tara 'away from everyone'.
- 3.2.41 In July, a friend saw Tara at the swimming pool and described that she 'appeared to be very anxious and out of character', rushing the children away to get changed and home. Her friend saw her again later in July, when she also appeared anxious.
- 3.2.42 On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Marcus told Tara's mother that Tara was depressed and that she just wanted him and did not want to see other people. Tara's mother was surprised as she saw no sign of depression when they had met a couple of days earlier so told Marcus to take Tara to the GP if she was depressed. He responded that he would 'sort her out'.
- 3.2.43 In October, Tara's friend visited the home and Marcus was drinking. He said, 'I'm going to look after Tara, and I am going to do it on my own'.
- 3.2.44 When Tara's friend visited on 19<sup>th</sup> October, Marcus opened the door and she saw Tara running upstairs. Marcus said, 'I'm sick of people coming to the fucking door, I'm telling you she doesn't want to see anyone'. Tara's friend was of the view that Marcus had stayed home from work to keep an eye on Tara.
- 3.2.45 On 22<sup>nd</sup> October, Tara sent a message via Facebook Messenger saying, 'missing you guys, love you' and as soon as the message was sent, she went offline.
- 3.2.46 One of Tara's friends described how Marcus would repeatedly make her appear to be a bad person, with the intention of destroying their friendship.
- 3.2.47 Marcus would let Tara down when arrangements had been made. If he was due to look after the children and Tara had arranged an outing, such as a meal out with her family, he would let her down at the last minute so that she could not go.

- 3.2.48 One of Tara's friends told the police that Marcus did not want Tara to socialise with her friends. She said she thought he would try and turn people against Tara.
- 3.2.49 **Verbal abuse**
- 3.2.50 At Christmas in 2006, Marcus came to Tara's parents address, where she was with the children. He was screaming and shouting outside the back door.
- 3.2.51 In May 2014, there was a verbal altercation and Tara called the police. The children were present at the time.
- 3.2.52 In giving evidence to the Care Proceedings, Marcus conceded that there were verbal altercations between himself and Tara.
- 3.2.53 **Physical and sexual abuse**
- 3.2.54 In 2005, Tara told her grandmother and uncle that Marcus had kicked her in the stomach whilst she was pregnant and holding her child. She was worried that she would lose the baby.
- 3.2.55 In February 2006, Marcus assaulted Tara causing bruising to her upper arms on both sides.
- 3.2.56 In April 2006, the police were called when Marcus had arrived to collect the children for contact. He had kicked down the door, pushed her around the house and grabbed her head and pushed it into the wall. He threw her on to the floor and when she tried to call the police, he grabbed her phone and kicked it outside. He then repeatedly punched her in the face. This took place in front of their children.
- 3.2.57 In July 2007, police attended after Marcus had assaulted her. She was noted to have slight reddening to the lower right side of her neck, bruising on her upper left and upper right arms, and a bruise on her lower right arm.
- 3.2.58 At some point in 2007, Tara showed her mother a black eye and bruising to her bicep. She said that Marcus had hit her.
- 3.2.59 During 2009, Tara's oldest child witnessed Marcus grab Tara by her hair and throw her to the ground.
- 3.2.60 In June 2009, Tara attended the Burns Unit at Nottingham City Hospital due to oil splashes on her right forearm. The review does not know if this was an accidental injury or caused by Marcus.
- 3.2.61 At some point, prior to September 2012, Marcus beat up Tara over the course of an hour. He punched and kicked her, causing bruising to the left side of her body.



- 3.2.62 Between June and October 2016, Tara sustained a number of fractured ribs after assaults by Marcus.
- 3.2.63 A friend of Tara described how she had been told about an incident when Marcus had forced Tara from a nightclub following an argument. He had forced her downstairs, punching her sides and hitting her in the back of a taxi. Tara had said that, when they got home, he had carried on hitting her, got her on the settee, put a knife to her throat, threatened to slash the settee, and forced her to have sex.
- 3.2.64 One of Tara's friends described how Marcus had hit Tara because she refused to have sex with him. When he packed bags and threatened to leave and take the children, she agreed.
- 3.2.65 In the attack that preceded Tara's death, Marcus had beaten her repeatedly with a bar or rod of some kind. Her youngest child, and Marcus in evidence, said that it was a rolling pin.
- 3.2.66 Whilst we cannot know for certain if Tara was sexually abused by Marcus on the night that she died, we can say that after her death she was found to have extensive bruising to the thighs, both the outer and inner aspects of her thighs.
- 3.2.67 **Financial or economic abuse**
- 3.2.68 When Tara was 18, she received an inheritance (and later received a second inheritance). This was spent entirely on Marcus. For example, he had driving lessons and bought a car. At the times when they were separated, Marcus gave Tara no financial support for the children.
- 3.2.69 Following the holiday in June 2016, Tara sought to borrow money from her relatives, which her mother says is completely out of character.
- 3.2.70 In June or July, she asked her father for £300 to pay her rent. Her paternal grandmother also gave her £600 in June or July. Her father then lent her £500 and a further £50 on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2016, which was paid back on 12<sup>th</sup> October.
- 3.2.71 Her grandmother lent her £2000, which Marcus claimed was for bills. This was confirmed by the fact that her grandmother paid the companies directly.
- 3.2.72 In September 2016, Tara's friend saw her, and Tara asked to borrow her phone so that she could text her bank details to Marcus.
- 3.2.73 On 21<sup>st</sup> October, Tara asked to borrow more money from her grandmother.
- 3.2.74 The Care Proceedings viewed text messages between Tara and Marcus, at this time, which suggested that Marcus was using the money to buy drugs to sell on.
- 3.2.75 As was referenced earlier, Tara had always wanted to be a midwife and during one of their many separations, she began to study for this, but she gave it up

when they were reunited. Although we do not know that he specifically prevented her from continuing with her studies, this undoubtedly had an impact on her ability to study that would impact on her ability to work and have her own income.

### 3.2.76 **With-holding medical treatment**

3.2.77 In September 2016, Tara sustained an injury to her arm which required the application of a 'cast' bought 'online'. Marcus said the injury had occurred whilst she was moving a sofa and that 'she did not want to go to hospital', even though it was hurting up until the time that she died.

3.2.78 Later in October 2016, Tara was seen by her grandmother crouched on the bed on all fours (on her hands and knees), with the left side of her face down on the pillow. She told her grandmother she had an ear infection and she was too weak to go to the doctors. Her grandmother told Marcus that Tara needed to see a doctor and gave him a telephone number. There is no evidence that he took her for medical treatment.

3.2.79 When we consider the abuse that Tara was subjected to, we see an escalation in the weeks leading up to her death: this will be discussed in more detail in Section 4 of this report.

## 3.3 **Detailed analysis of Agency Involvement**

---

3.3.1 The chronology set out in Section 2 details about the information known to agencies involved. This section summarises the totality of the information known to agencies and analyses their involvement.

3.3.2 The original Chair had set the scope of the review as 12<sup>th</sup> June 2011 to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016. Relevant information outside of this scoping period has also been analysed. It was also agreed by the panel that the scope of the review would include two previous partners of Tara's partner.

### 3.3.3 **Nottinghamshire Police**

#### 3.3.3.1 **12<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

3.3.3.2 During a domestic incident, it is alleged that Marcus punched his then partner, Angie, (whom he had been with for 15 months), inflicting a facial injury. The next morning, he left the property taking the door keys with him. Angie reported to the police that he had left with the keys. When she was seen by officers, Angie was observed to have a facial injury, but she was reluctant to say how this had happened.

3.3.3.3 Marcus was arrested for assault on Angie: he denied causing any injury to her. Angie was not able to pursue the complaint and endorsed the officer's pocketbook to say that she did not wish to pursue the complaint.

- 3.3.3.4 Marcus was released on police bail, with conditions, while the investigation was continued. As there was insufficient evidence to charge him, he was released without charge.
- 3.3.3.5 The risk level was assessed as MEDIUM and over the following months Angie was visited by the local officers. She said that she had no further problems with Marcus.

**The review agrees with the IMR author that appropriate and proactive action was taken by the police in locating and arresting Marcus. It is noted as good practice that the local officers followed up the incident with visits to Angie.**

The IMR author is of the view that the police could not proceed with a prosecution as Angie was not willing to make a statement. There is no record provided about whether an evidence led prosecution was considered. In light of the review, given that officers had witnessed her injury, **this is a missed opportunity**. That said, it is acknowledged that the knowledge and understanding of evidence led prosecutions has improved significantly since 2011.

## **Recommendation Two**

**It is recommended that Nottinghamshire Police provides reassurance to the CSP that evidence led prosecutions are now considered more robustly in all domestic abuse cases.**

### **3.3.3.6 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011**

- 3.3.3.7 Angie reported a verbal altercation that had occurred over the telephone between her and Marcus. At this time, Marcus was on police bail following his arrest on 12<sup>th</sup> June and he had bail conditions not to contact her.
- 3.3.3.8 Police established that Angie had instigated the contact by telephoning Marcus about the return of property. The risk level was assessed as MEDIUM.

**The review agrees with the police that, as he was not in breach of bail, there was no action that could be taken.**

### **3.3.3.9 14<sup>th</sup> August 2011 (Sunday)**

- 3.3.3.10 Tara and Marcus had a verbal argument over the telephone regarding the issue of access to their children and the ending of their relationship. At the time, Tara was outside the home of Bernie (Marcus' partner) where she had gone to collect her children who were staying with Marcus. At this time, the children should have been in the care of Marcus but were with Bernie whilst Marcus was spending time with Angie.
- 3.3.3.11 Tara had received messages from Marcus saying that she was not getting the children back. She was, reportedly, under the influence of alcohol.

3.3.3.12 It was established that a court order was in place that allowed Marcus to have custody of the children overnight from Sunday until Monday morning. The children were returned to Tara the next day without incident.

3.3.3.13 No offences were recorded, but the incident was recorded as a domestic incident and the risk was identified as STANDARD.

**The review agrees with the IMR author that the police action was appropriate.**

**3.3.3.14 13<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

3.3.3.15 Tara and Marcus were customers together at a public house. The group they were with were asked to leave the premises by the female licensee. Tara then threw a drink over the licensee. Marcus went to the private side of the bar and allegedly pushed the licensee in the chest, causing her to fall to the floor. They left the premises prior to police arrival.

3.3.3.16 The police investigation led to Tara and Marcus being identified as being involved in the disturbance. Tara was interviewed and admitted throwing the drink. She was issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice for a public order offence.

3.3.3.17 Marcus was also interviewed and admitted pushing the licensee over. He claimed that he had acted in self-defence. He was reported for summons for Common Assault, but ultimately no action was taken.

**The review agrees with the IMR author that the police action was appropriate. In addition, the review notes that Marcus claimed that he was acting in self-defence. His lack of acceptance of responsibility for his actions is discussed in more detail elsewhere in the report.**

**3.3.3.18 6<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

3.3.3.19 During a house-party, Marcus allegedly assaulted a female, Adult C, outside the address, causing bruising to her forehead. Officers were alerted to the disturbance whilst patrolling in the area and arrested Marcus. He immediately denied being responsible for the assault, stating that he had stopped Adult C from assaulting someone else and that he had received a cut lip himself.

3.3.3.20 Adult C did not feel able to make a statement or assistance in the investigation. She said that she was not in a relationship with Marcus. She endorsed the officer's pocket notebook to this effect. In the absence of CCTV or witnesses, there was insufficient evidence for a case to proceed. He was therefore released without charge.

3.3.3.21 As there was no evidence that Adult C and Marcus were in a relationship, this incident was not recorded as a domestic assault/incident.

3.3.3.22 During the investigation into Tara's death, Adult C was seen and provided a witness statement. She stated that she was not in a formal relationship with

Marcus when she was assaulted, but that she had been on holiday with him as friends.

**The review agrees with the IMR author that this was a positive response by police to arrest and interview Marcus and investigate the incident.**

#### 3.3.3.23 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014

3.3.3.24 Tara reported a verbal altercation with her ex-partner, Marcus, at her home address.

3.3.3.25 When officers arrived, Marcus was confrontational with them. As no assaults or injuries had occurred, he was removed to a friend's address to prevent a breach of the peace.

3.3.3.26 The children were all present at the address. DASH risk assessment forms were completed with Tara. It was identified that this was a domestic incident where there had been a verbal argument.

3.3.3.27 It was recorded on the DASH risk assessment that:

- Marcus had been violent towards her on a number of occasions in the past
- There was intelligence on Marcus in relation to violence
- She stated that she was frightened that he would return and hurt her
- She felt isolated from her family and friends and she had tried to separate from him in the past year
- Marcus's behaviour towards her was controlling
- Marcus had never hurt the children
- The abuse was not happening more often or getting worse
- He had never used weapons to hurt her, or threatened to kill her, or strangled her
- She was not sure if he would hurt anyone else

**The family feel that the risk assessment may have been higher if action had been taken to verify the relationship status with other family members, which would have clarified that Tara had not yet separated. As the full report cannot be retrieved, the review is unable to comment upon this.**

3.3.3.28 The level of risk was assessed as MEDIUM. The assessment was then submitted to the Domestic Abuse Support Unit (DASU) in line with agreed practice.

3.3.3.29 On receipt of the DASH report, a risk assessor within DASU is responsible for carrying out background checks on the victim and perpetrator on police systems which allows the assessor to either endorse or alter the identified level of risk. In this case, the risk level remained as MEDIUM. The completed DASH report was then submitted to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

3.3.3.30 A MASH domestic abuse meeting<sup>19</sup> was held on 15<sup>th</sup> May. It was agreed that:

- A MASH enquiry would take place to gather all relevant information regarding the children
- The MEDIUM risk assessment would remain in place
- That Children’s Social Care would make contact with Tara
- That the information held by the police would be shared with Children’s Social Care

The review agrees with the IMR author that the police action in this case was appropriate.

The review also notes that, in 2014, interventions that were put in place for cases that were assessed as MEDIUM were limited. These interventions have now improved and the review notes that a case assessed as MEDIUM would now receive:

#### Medium Risk with consent given

##### *County residents*

- Referred to Nottinghamshire Women’s Aid for follow-up contact, appointment of MRW if agreed
- After 3 attempts letter sent

##### *Nottingham city residents*

With Children – referred to DART for follow-up contact

No children – referred to JUNO Women’s Aid for follow-up contact

After 3 attempts letter sent

#### Medium Risk with no consent given

##### *County residents*

The Insight Team for “Safe & Support” will make contact. When the victim agrees to participate, a seven-point engagement:

- Confirm / record the most up-to-date safe contact number for the victim
- Confirm / record the most up-to-date address for the victim
- Offer each victim contact details of their Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT)
- Offer each victim contact details of services such as Women’s Aid/Men’s Advice/Samaritans
- Offer each victim details of mobile phone apps which provide advice/support information (Hollie Guard and Bright Sky)
- Offer each victim information regarding the Nottinghamshire Police website, and where advice/support details can be found
- Check how the victim has been since the report to the police

---

<sup>19</sup> This is a daily meeting, held within the MASH, where contributors from relevant agencies are present or who participate via video link. The DASH risk assessment reports submitted by the police within the previous 24 hours are assessed, with particular focus being on those that involve children. The partner agencies - police, social care and health discuss the incident and agree on and instigate actions to be taken to reduce risk.

**If after 5 attempts at contact the victim has not been reached, a signposting letter is sent.**

**City residents with children concerned – referred to DART for follow-up contact.**

**City residents with no children – Insight Team as per county**

### 3.3.3.31 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016

3.3.3.32 Marcus's mother reported him as a missing person. She said that he had last been seen on 27<sup>th</sup> July when he had left. He was recorded as a missing person on COMPACT<sup>20</sup> and enquiries were commenced to locate him. Within the report it was recorded that Marcus was seeing a female and her boyfriend was seeking him out, with this being a potential reason for him being missing.

3.3.3.33 On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Marcus was located safe and well at Tara's address. He said that he had been sleeping rough in his car for a few days.

**The review agrees with the IMR author that the police response was appropriate.**

### 3.3.3.34 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2016

3.3.3.35 Tara's mother reported to the police that she was concerned for the safety of Tara and her children from Marcus. She said that Tara had been acting out of character recently and she may be in a bad domestic situation.

3.3.3.36 Research on police systems found that Tara was recorded on CATS<sup>21</sup> as MEDIUM risk, having been involved in four domestic incidents previously with Marcus. Neither Tara nor Marcus were recorded as being involved in any recent incidents/occurrences on Niche<sup>22</sup>. Marcus was recorded as a missing person at this time.

3.3.3.37 Officers visited the address and carried out a welfare check on Tara. She was seen and found to be safe and well. She did not report any domestic incidents or abuse. As the welfare check did not identify any issues, details of the incident were not shared with other agencies.

3.3.3.38 Tara's mother was contacted and updated that her daughter had been seen, was well, and had not disclosed any issues or concerns. There is no record of her reporting any further concerns about Tara to the police.

**The IMR author notes that the police action was appropriate. The Report Author notes that it is not recorded whether Marcus was present when the police visited. The officer told the previous Chair that he would have spoken to Tara alone, but Marcus could have been in the property. Given that on that same day**

<sup>20</sup> This is Nottinghamshire Police Missing Person investigation and recording system. It records persons reported as missing, assessment of risk and the investigative actions/tasks undertaken during the investigation.

<sup>21</sup> CATS (Case Administration and Tracking System) is a vulnerable persons case management system.

<sup>22</sup> This is the networked regional computer system that records occurrences, crime reports, investigation logs and intelligence reports. These include reports of domestic incidents, assaults and abuse.

he was found at this address by officers investigating his disappearance, it is possible that he was there. If he was there, this would have undoubtedly impacted upon Tara's response to the officers.

3.3.4 The family's view is that 'the officer's report clearly indicates that both were in the house and that he conducted a 'threat to life' and a 'safe and well' check in just 23 minutes. No written report exists of either consultation and, although he says that he took Marcus into the kitchen to speak to him, he doesn't recall whether he spoke to Tara alone. He also did not see the children, even though the 'safe and well' check was supposed to be for them as well as Tara. This was despite it being the afternoon during the school holidays and with a three-year-old in the house. Furthermore, Tara's mother's request for a 'safe and well' check clearly indicated that Marcus had been violent towards her in the past.'

**The police have been for further comment and have responded as follows:**

3.3.5 'The previous incidents are recorded on the incident log for the officer's information prior to attending. Therefore, the officer spoke with Tara with the background knowledge of previous offending, and they specifically asked about domestic abuse. Tara told the officer that she was fine/the relationship was fine and that there was no domestic abuse to disclose. As there was no complaint the only record is the update that the officer passed to control room.'

3.3.6 Having considered this response from the police, Tara's family remained unhappy with the response to the call. Having reflected on this, the family lodged a complaint with the IOPC. This is subject of a separate regulatory process.<sup>23</sup>

3.3.6.1 **Specific questions for Nottinghamshire Police asked by Tara's family**

3.3.6.2 **Were any of the reports of violence against women ever tied to previous incidents with other women?**

3.3.6.3 The police responded by pointing out that the domestic incidents that involved Marcus, where he was allegedly violent to women, were separated by a number of years. These were not linked to other incidents, although they were recorded and officers/risk assessors dealing with incidents had access to this information.

**The review is clear that although officers may have had access to this information, there is nothing to suggest that they actually accessed it. That said, the police now use a system called Niche that is accessible to all and ensures that all information is available to officers. In addition, the secondary risk assessment process which takes place within the DASU, reviews previous history to inform the risk level and to determine if it is appropriate, and whether a DVDS should be considered.**

---

<sup>23</sup> At the time of writing (November 2022) this investigation remains incomplete



**3.3.6.4 In 2014, was a search into his previous history undertaken? Would Nottinghamshire Social Services have dropped the case as easily if they had been aware of the reports associated with Angie?**

3.3.6.5 The answer is that a search was not done. However, if the search had been carried out it would have only identified the domestic assault of Marcus on Angie in 2011. This was assessed as a MEDIUM risk. In 2014, the evidence was that the couple were not together, and Tara had acted appropriately to look after herself and the children.

**The family's view remains that the absence of the reported incident in November 2011 downplays the risk of harm that the police felt that Marcus posed to women. The only evidence that the couple were not together was the say so of the couple, or maybe just Marcus.**

Whilst the police were unable to locate the archived records for this case at the time of this review, the family have provided the review with documents that include a police report relating to the 2011 incident. The report shows that the attending officer felt that risk to the previous partner was 'high', however, after the assessment had been reviewed it was placed formally at 'medium risk'. That case was now ten years ago and as a result it is not appropriate for this review to scrutinise the individual officer's views from that single incident. The fact that initial reports are subject to review and supervision was right then and is right now: it is an appropriate check and balance. The risk assessment process and understanding of domestic abuse has improved significantly in those ten years. Having said all that, this review can fully understand the family's distress at seeing that the person they hold responsible for their daughter's death was considered by an officer as a high risk to a previous partner. Their view is that had the case remained recorded as 'high risk', further actions may have been triggered when assessing the risk he posed to Tara.

3.3.6.6 CSC were aware of the information about Marcus's previous partners and relationships. However, given the low level of concerns in 2014 and lack of specific child protection issues, it would not have been lawful or proportionate to share the information. The information about Angie did not change the CSC decision that the threshold had not been met for continued involvement. The reason given for this is that there was no evidence to suggest that the couple were together; and Tara was deemed to have acted appropriately to protect herself and her children.

**Tara's family believe that this is based on false and incorrect information. They believe that Marcus had been living there since November 2012 and that the couple had attended family weddings in 2013 and 2014. The review has not been able to verify if this information was known to agencies.**

**Tara's family are of the view that, 'the only reason they can say there is no evidence to suggest the couple were together is that they couldn't have looked for evidence. The fact that Tara had stated he was controlling and that she was scared of him returning and hurting her for a second time, having previously**

been stated in 2006, should have led to an increase in concern when she refused to co-operate with social services.’

The review notes this concern by the family but is cognisant of the time that had elapsed between the two incidents: the fact that Tara was an adult with no reported issues around her capacity to make informed decisions, and the relative level of risk that appeared to exist at that stage.

These aspects are reflected upon again in commentary at 3.3.5.16.

3.3.6.7 The Review Panel<sup>24</sup> considered whether Tara could have made a request under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) or Clare’s Law to learn more about Marcus’s involvement with other partners. This was launched in March 2014 and therefore was available at the time of the incident between Tara and Marcus on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014. However, the panel felt that had Tara (or someone on her behalf such as her mother) made an application, the criteria for its use would not have been met.

3.3.6.8 The criteria for the DVDS scheme is below and is taken from the Nottinghamshire Police procedure.

#### 3.3.6.9 **Categorising a “concern” or “no concern”**

3.3.6.10 A “concern” occurs if A is at risk of harm from B, based on a balanced profile of B that takes into account the following factors:

- B has convictions for an offence related to domestic violence (see Annex B for list of offences) that may be disclosed under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974; and/or
- B is a serial perpetrator of domestic violence; and/or
- there is intelligence known about the previous violent and abusive offending of B which may include:
  - cases not proceeded with; and/or
  - intelligence concerning violent or abusive offences; and/or
  - previous concerning behaviour towards previous partners. This may include a pattern of behaviours that indicate that B has stalked or exercised coercive control over previous partners, including after the end of a relationship.

And/or

- there is concerning behaviour by B demonstrated towards A. This may include a pattern of behaviours that indicate that B is stalking or exercising coercive control over A.

3.3.6.11 There was no contact with Tara to enable a DVDS disclosure in the two years leading to her death. Tara’s only contact with the police were two incidents in

---

<sup>24</sup> Chaired by the previous Chair.

May 2014 for domestic violence, no crime. Because of that, it would not have met the criteria above.

3.3.6.12 Had Tara contacted the police and had (on a balanced profile) we shown that Tara was a risk of harm from Marcus, there were no recent domestic abuse crimes to disclose to Tara. The most recent prior to 2014 was a domestic abuse incident (no crime) in 2011. There was one previous assault where he was arrested for a domestic abuse Common Assault in 2011, but was not charged. Although non-convictions can be disclosed, it is only one of the above factors met and as it was over 3 years old it is unlikely to have met the threshold for disclosure. In 2006, he was arrested for a DA assault and damage, but this was in relation to Tara and therefore she would be aware of his violence.

**3.3.6.13 Why did the police not tell Children’s Social Care, in 2016, that he was back home, having removed him from the property in 2014?**

3.3.6.14 When police attended in May 2014, Marcus was removed from the property in order to prevent a breach of the peace. The incident was assessed as MEDIUM risk. This was only a temporary measure and had no legal basis or conditions to prevent him from returning to the address.

**3.3.6.15 In 2016, was a search into previous history undertaken?**

3.3.6.16 In August 2016, when Marcus was seen at the address, he had been reported as a missing person by his mother.

3.3.6.17 This was at the same time Tara’s mother expressed concerns about Tara and the children. There is no evidence that the police checked the previous history of the couple. However, if they had, they would have only found the incident in 2014 when there was a domestic incident, with no criminal actions, and an agreement by Marcus to leave the property temporarily.

3.3.6.18 Tara was seen by an officer in August 2016 and assessed to be safe and well. She did not disclose any incidents or domestic abuse at that time.

3.3.6.19 As there were no concerns for Tara’s welfare or safety at that time, there was no basis on which the police would share this with Children’s Social Care.

**Tara’s family feel that the police were more concerned about the safety of Marcus than they were about the safety of Tara and the children.**

**3.3.7 MARAC (Multi-agency risk assessment conference) and Women’s Aid<sup>25</sup>**

3.3.7.1 WAIS City IDVA service provides support to women whose cases were heard at the Nottingham City and South Nottinghamshire MARAC meetings.

---

<sup>25</sup> These agencies have been discussed together as their actions overlap with one another.

### 3.3.7.2 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011

3.3.7.3 A MARAC referral was received for Angie. Contact was attempted but was unsuccessful. It is noted that the attempt was made within two working days of the referral being received.

**This is in line with Women's Aid policies and is an example for good practice.**

3.3.7.4 On 6<sup>th</sup> September, telephone contact was made with Angie. The IDVA<sup>26</sup> service was explained to her. Safety planning was discussed with Angie and a support plan was created. Angie requested support with making a homeless application to another town<sup>27</sup>. The IDVA agreed to make the request for a supporting letter at the MARAC meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September.

3.3.7.5 On 8<sup>th</sup> September, the MARAC meeting was held, and it was agreed to provide the letter of support to Angie. This letter was received on 15<sup>th</sup> September and this letter, along with a letter of support from Women's Aid, were sent to Angie.

3.3.7.6 Angie was spoken to on the telephone on 20<sup>th</sup> September and she confirmed that she had received the support letters. She said she had not seen Marcus and was still intending to return to the other town. It was agreed that she needed no further support, the helpline number was left with her, and the case was closed.

**The review is satisfied that MARAC and the IDVA provided the support that Angie requested in a timely manner.**

**The review notes that the practice of closing cases as soon as the survivor said they needed no further support was in line with the policy at the time. The review also notes that, following a recommendation from another DHR, a case will now stay open for two weeks and a follow-up call will be made before closing the case. This allows the survivor the opportunity to have time to reflect and identify areas of support that they might not have initially thought about.**

**This was the only interaction that MARAC or the IDVA service had with any of Marcus's partners.**

### 3.3.8 Children's Social Care (CSC) – Nottinghamshire County Council

#### 3.3.8.1 April 2006

3.3.8.2 The police contacted CSC as they had attended a domestic incident at Tara's address involving Tara and Marcus. There had been an argument when Marcus came to collect the children for contact. This had resulted in Marcus kicking and punching Tara causing bruising. This took place in front of the children. At the time, Marcus's whereabouts was unknown: Tara made a statement to the police.

---

<sup>27</sup> The name of the town is known to the review but is not included to protect Angie.

The IMR author notes that, as the couple were separated, CSC did not take any action. The review considers that, as there were alleged injuries and the incident took place in front of the children, an initial assessment should have been undertaken at this point. **This was a missed opportunity, but the review is advised that, if this occurred now, a physical assault in front of the children would have led to a discussion in the MASH about whether an assessment was needed.**

### 3.3.8.3 October and December 2007

3.3.8.4 In October 2007, a referral was made by the police after they had been called by Tara. Marcus had visited her property and was kicking the door and causing a disturbance. Tara had refused to open the door due to the previous violence and he left when the police arrived.

**The IMR author notes that Tara had acted appropriately to protect her children and remained separated from Marcus, therefore, CSC did not take any further action other than to record the incident.**

3.3.8.5 A second referral was made by the police in December 2007. This was following an incident where Tara contacted the police as Marcus had not returned the children after contact. The police visited the children at Marcus's home and found the children safe and well.

**CSC viewed this as a matter for the parents to resolve through the courts if necessary.**

### 3.3.8.6 June 2014

3.3.8.7 A further referral was received from the police and an Initial Assessment was completed. This incident was a further dispute about contact where a verbal altercation was recorded, with no assault or injuries. Due to the previous referrals, the threshold for an assessment was met.

3.3.8.8 The initial assessment concluded that the current and historic domestic violence did not meet the threshold for continued CSC involvement. This decision was reached in the context of the level of abuse and also the fact that the couple remained separated. It was noted that Tara had acted appropriately to protect her children and there was not any apparent evidence of impact on the children's development and emotional well-being<sup>28</sup>.

3.3.8.9 CSC notes that the visit to undertake the Initial Assessment was carried out within appropriate timescales. The older children were spoken to alone and

---

<sup>28</sup> Pathway to Provision: Multi-Agency Thresholds Guidance for Nottinghamshire Children's Services  
<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/129861/pathwaytoprovisionhandbook.pdf>

did not disclose any concerns. The assessment explored Tara's experience of domestic violence, both within her own relationships and as a child. She said she had not experienced domestic abuse as a child. Tara was spoken to alone and given the opportunity to disclose concerns and seek support.

3.3.8.10 CSC concludes that the assessment was proportionate given that the previous referrals had not contained any evidence of physical violence or injury other than the incident in 2006, which was 8 years previously. The issues appeared to be in connection with disputes around contact and Tara had acted appropriately to protect herself and the children.

**The IMR notes that Tara struggled to see the relevance of the assessment and acknowledges that Tara might not have seen the assessment as a positive and supportive approach, and that this might have been as a result of the perception of CSC by the public.**

**The IMR author notes that there is no evidence that Tara was given the details of support agencies such as Women's Aid. A learning point for CSC is that if contact details are given for support agencies, this should be recorded in the notes.**

### **Recommendation Three**

**It is recommended that CSC ensure that social work teams have up-to-date information to give to families in respect of support services for victims of domestic abuse.**

### **Recommendation Four**

**Given the time since the IMR was written, it is recommended that CSC provide reassurance to the CSP that this is now routine and provide an explanation about how this reassurance has been arrived at.**

### **Recommendation Five**

**It is recommended that CSC are more persistent in contacting agencies if parents refuse as part of an initial assessment where the concerns are significant enough for this to be done without consent. The review acknowledges that CSC work with parents to understand the importance of sharing information with their consent to support the protection of their children.**

#### **3.3.8.11 Specific question from Tara's family for Children's Social Care**

**3.3.8.12 Is there a mechanism for checking social services involvement with a person between different authorities or is it down to the police to inform local authorities of any previous domestic incidents?**

3.3.8.13 CSC has a statutory responsibility to refer concerns in respect of any child who is likely to meet the threshold for statutory intervention who is living in another local authority area or if the information is of relevance to another local authority.

3.3.8.14 Nottinghamshire County Council did not make a referral to Nottingham City Council at the time of the initial assessment in June 2014 as there were no concerns other than around contact arrangements with the children.

3.3.8.15 All local authorities have in place information-sharing agreements to facilitate the sharing of information to safeguard children, young people and adults. The sharing of information has to be lawful and proportionate and a fair balance between the rights of the individual and those of the rest of the community must be struck. There must be a reasonable relationship between the aim to be achieved and the means used.

Information cannot be shared as a matter of routine. So, for example, if the police are attending a call for service about a domestic abuse incident, they will not necessarily be aware of information held by another agency.

3.3.8.16 Following feedback from the family of Tara, the review has sought further information from Children's Social Care about some of the areas that continue to concern the family. They are summarised here to place them in a more readable format.

3.3.8.17 There were two overriding complicating factors that affected the Children's Social Care response in this case: a) the issue of consent when the risk of harm to the children is not considered 'significant or high' and, b) the fact that Marcus's previous partner and child/ren resided in Nottingham City and not Nottinghamshire, which meant that the information was not available to Nottinghamshire's system.

3.3.8.18 Firstly, the issue of consent. We know that, during the assessments, Tara did not give her consent for Children's Social Care to contact school. This is acknowledged within the review as an area of learning and that more work could have been undertaken to try and explain to Tara why it was important for us to speak to school and that the purpose of the assessment was for her, and her children's protection and safety, rather than what we think her perception of social work intervention probably was – a tool to remove her children. At the time, this lack of direct consent, based upon what Children's Social Care had assessed the risk of harm as, precluded them from speaking to wider family and friends.

3.3.8.19 Secondly, the information on other systems. In terms of accessing information about Marcus from the police, the police would be unlikely to have shared information about previous involvement and convictions outside of the child protection procedure without the consent of the adult – the perpetrator. They did share with Children's Social Care, for the purpose of the assessment, a history of their involvement with incidents relating to Tara and her partner, but nothing more. Children's Social Care knew about Marcus's other child and a view could be taken that they could have contacted Nottingham City to advise them that they had undertaken an assessment, but checks of records now appear to indicate that Nottinghamshire Children's Social Care did not have an address of where he was living **and** within the context of the information

available to them at the time, it would not have been ‘normal’ or expected practice. This is likely to remain the case now unless it is thought there is a risk to that child.

3.3.8.20 Children’s Social Care have reflected on their involvement and have considered their practice as outlined above in terms of Tara’s understanding of the purpose of the assessment, and whether more work could have been done to engage Tara which may, in turn, have led to more information being gathered and therefore further action being taken.

3.3.8.21 They have also reflected upon their level of professional curiosity. Scrutiny of the information available on the file would indicate that the practice at the time is what would be expected of the level of information that was recorded; it still would not have attained the level of a child protection enquiry that would have allowed for police checks and other additional enquiries. Whilst policies and procedures and the issue of consent is still very complex and Children’s Social Care are legally bound by the Children Act and the Human Rights Act Article, what has improved significantly is the understanding of domestic abuse and the complex layers of emotional, financial abuse and coercive behaviour. These are now more fully understood and decisions about levels of risk are not so dependent on physical injury, which appeared to be a factor in the decision making with Tara. In other words, not only would the risk to the child/ren be considered, but there would be a clearer view of the risk factors affecting Tara.

### 3.3.6.1 Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

#### 3.3.6.2 May 2010

3.3.6.3 Tara attended the A&E department because she had fallen on the stairs at home and had injured her shoulder. Her injury matched her description of the incident and staff had no concerns or suspicion that domestic abuse might have been a factor.

#### 3.3.6.4 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014

3.3.6.5 Tara was referred to the Burns Unit at Nottingham City Hospital by her GP. She said that she had been cooking mushrooms in a frying pan when hot oil had splashed on to her forearm and hand. There was no suspicion of domestic abuse as, again, her description of the incident and the pattern of burns matched.

**The review notes that there appears to be a lack of professional curiosity when staff saw Tara in the Burns Unit and it is not clear that staff asked any questions that would have allowed her the opportunity to disclose any abuse.**

### **Recommendation Six**

**It is recommended that the Government considers adopting the “Ask and Act” Policy that is in place in Wales. “Ask and Act” is a process of targeted enquiry**



practiced across public services to identify violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The term targeted enquiry describes the recognition of indicators of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence as a prompt for a professional to ask their client whether they have been affected by any of these issues<sup>29</sup>.

#### 3.3.6.6 **1<sup>st</sup> March 2014**

3.3.6.7 Tara registered her family with SureStart<sup>30</sup>, but did not subsequently access the service.

3.3.6.8 The 0-19 Healthy Family Team<sup>31</sup> provided a universal service to all of Tara's children since the birth of the eldest. The provision of a universal service indicates that there were no issues of particular concern around the care of the children.

3.3.6.9 No concerns were raised by either Tara or health professionals regarding domestic abuse at the time of any of the children's universal contacts and reviews.

**It is not clear from the IMR whether the health visitors and school nurses will have routinely asked about domestic abuse. The Report Author has established that now, in 2020, health visitors and school nurses *will* routinely ask about domestic abuse and record the answer on the records. If they are not able to ask, for example because the partner is present, this will be recorded on the record too.**

**The review is also assured that although a health visitor under the universal service only has a set number of visits to make, if the practitioner had any concerns, they would seek to find another opportunity to ask the question before the next visit was due and/or seek advice from their line manager or safeguarding lead.**

#### 3.3.7 **North Nottinghamshire West and Rushcliffe Clinical Commissioning Groups on behalf of GP contracted services**

3.3.7.1 Tara and her children were registered at a local GP practice. They received assessment and treatment for general medical concerns on request and when required they were referred to specialist services<sup>32</sup>.

#### 3.3.7.2 **6<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

3.3.7.3 Tara attended the GP for a health concern: she told the GP that she had been in a stable relationship for the past year.

<sup>29</sup> <https://gov.wales/identifying-violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence-ask-and-act>

<sup>30</sup> Surestart children's centres provide help and support to young children and their families as soon as it is needed, helping to prevent any problems developing. The services are available to any parents/carers of children aged 0-5 years.

<sup>31</sup> Healthy Family Teams provide an integrated service for all children, young people and families, bringing together the care provided by health visitors, school nurses, the Family Nurse Partnership Programme and the National Childhood Measurement Programme.

<sup>32</sup> The IMR submitted has been completed by a person with a medical background, therefore the Report Author has assumed that where details of medical appointments are not included, the IMR author is confident that they are not relevant to the review.

**3.3.7.4 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012**

3.3.7.5 Tara attended the GP with a health concern. When asked, she told the GP that she had been with the same partner for a while.

**3.3.7.6 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012**

3.3.7.7 When Tara saw the GP, she was pregnant and stated that she was in a stable relationship. She told the GP that she was a non-smoker and a non-drinker.

**3.3.7.8 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013**

3.3.7.9 Tara was seen the by the GP with a minor ailment and the GP recorded that she looked well.

**3.3.7.10 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014**

3.3.7.11 The GP records contain a summary of an attendance at the Burns Unit at Nottingham City Hospital, for oil splash burns on her right forearm.

**3.3.7.12 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2016**

3.3.7.13 Tara was referred by her GP to the Colorectal Surgeon<sup>33</sup>.

**The review notes that Tara was not on any repeat medication and had limited contact with her GP and health services. The review notes that she was seen alone on most occasions and was asked about her family situation and relationships. Her responses to these questions were also noted. The review considers that this is an example of good practice.**

**The review also notes that the GP practice has posters displayed in the female toilets and leaflets in the waiting area about domestic abuse services. Safeguarding training and awareness is undertaken by staff every year and is part of the induction for new staff.**

3.3.7.14 The children's GP records were seen by the IMR author and there was nothing out of the ordinary noted that might have raised concerns about domestic abuse.

**3.3.8 Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group on behalf of GP contracted services<sup>34</sup>**

3.3.8.1 Marcus was registered at the same GP since childhood. He had attended with common childhood illnesses and there had been brief involvement with an educational psychologist.

<sup>33</sup> Was still waiting to be seen at the time of her death.

<sup>34</sup> This IMR was not available to the Report Author so this information is all taken directly from the previous report.

3.3.8.2 There was only one reference in his records that involved domestic abuse. In September 2011, the GP was notified by MARAC about a verbal and physical altercation with a former partner (not Tara). There is nothing in his records to suggest that he had been identified as a perpetrator of domestic abuse on any other occasion, or that he had ever been the victim of domestic abuse.

## Section Four – Analysis

### 4.1 Tara’s vulnerability and how she was targeted by Marcus

---

- 4.1.1 Tara was a teenager who was very sensitive and wanted to please people and do her best. She had a place at college to study childcare and was described as not being ‘worldly wise’. She had not been in touch with her birth father for a number of years and it is possible that she craved attention from a man. The review has been told that she wanted a ‘happy ever after’ relationship with a mother and father for her children
- 4.1.2 Marcus was seeing one of Tara’s friends and he then got involved with Tara<sup>35</sup>. Tara did not tell her mother about the relationship initially and this secrecy was very out of character for Tara. This secrecy may have been a key part of his initial grooming of Tara<sup>36</sup>.
- 4.1.3 She became pregnant, four months into the relationship, when she was 15 and Marcus was 20. Tara only disclosed the relationship and pregnancy to her mother when her mother recognised the signs and confronted her. Tara was treated by her GP, midwife and the local hospital for the pregnancy. Because Tara came from a supportive family and she was going to, initially, live with them, there was no referral made to Children’s Social Care. It is important that we remember that she was a child and he was an adult.

The review notes that there have been significant changes to how teenage mothers are supported over recent years. NHCT is responsible for the Integrated Healthy Child and Public Health Nursing Programme for 0-19-year olds. This programme brings together care provided by health visitors, school nurses, the Family Nurse Partnership Programme (for first time teenage mothers) and the National Childhood Measurement Programme. FNP is an evidence-based home visiting service providing ongoing, intensive support to first-time teenage mothers and their babies (plus fathers and other family members, with mother’s permission). Structured home visits are delivered by specialist Family Nurses and start in early pregnancy, continuing until the child’s second birthday.

FNP seeks to enable young parents to:

- Develop good relationships with and understand the needs of their child
- Make choices that will give their child the best possible start in life
- Believe in themselves and their ability to succeed
- Mirror the positive relationship they have with their family nurse with others.

In addition, the structure around health visiting and school nursing has changed, with both professions being amalgamated into local 0-19 Healthy Family teams. This allows for an ongoing support package around mothers still in education, with extensive information sharing. Records are now mainly held

---

<sup>35</sup> The review is aware that he continued to encourage relationships and interest with teenage girls for a number of years, into his thirties.

<sup>36</sup>How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser, Hennessey, Atrium, 2012, p42

electronically, enabling GPs, 0-19 teams and other health professionals to see more information and understand the wider circumstances. Towards the end of pregnancy, a joint visit is conducted by the midwife and 0-19 practitioner to ensure a full and smooth handover once the baby is born. The birth visit by the 0-19 service comprises of physical and mental health checks and an assessment around what level of service mother and baby need. One of the options is for the mother and baby to be referred to their local children's centre for ongoing support around parenting and emotional wellbeing.

- 4.1.4 Hennessey (2012) talks about how an abuser targets his victim and his work will be drawn on throughout this section. He says that the abuser will be seeking a woman who exhibits certain characteristics and his decision to proceed with the relationship is based upon a belief that the relationship will be one where he will be in charge<sup>37</sup>. This was Tara's first serious relationship and she was described as being a normal 14-year-old by her family. She was described as caring and always looking to see the best in people. She was what Hennessey describes as 'kind' and therefore a prime target for Marcus. She would have revealed her kindness in the way that she talked about and reacted to the needs of others. There is no reasonable explanation other than to say that Marcus groomed Tara.
- 4.1.5 Using the learning from Hennessey, we can assume that when his relationship began with Tara, Marcus would have already developed some strong beliefs and attitudes. He would have known what he required from an intimate relationship and he would have been convinced that he was *entitled* to have those needs met. He would also have been convinced that his needs outweighed any cost to Tara. In other words, he would have believed that he was entitled to be the centre of any relationship. Whilst he may not have set out intentionally to become abusive and violent, he would have already been convinced that he could behave in that way if circumstances so required<sup>38</sup>. We can see from his relationship with his own parents that he was not averse to using violence if he thought it was needed, towards both his mother and father, but his problem with anger goes back even further. His early medical records, at the age of six, describe him as having 'a longstanding problem with explosive aggressive behaviour which has become so severe recently it is making his presence in school intolerable'. Skilled abusers, Hennessey reminds us, have a well-developed ability to use past experiences to explain how they behave.<sup>39</sup>
- 4.1.6 The act of sexual intimacy, given Tara's young age and inexperience, was important to Marcus. He could cultivate in her an acceptance of the view that his needs would take priority in sexual matters. She may have had an under-developed sense of her own femininity due to her young age and this makes any challenge to that all the more powerful<sup>40</sup>. The judge, in the Family Court hearing, was satisfied that the term 'relationship' and the concept of fidelity, had no real meaning to Marcus. He went on to say that Marcus gave the clear

---

<sup>37</sup> How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser, Hennessey, Atrium, 2012, p19

<sup>38</sup>ibid, p18

<sup>39</sup>ibid, p52

<sup>40</sup>ibid, p182

impression that women existed to provide him with sex, accommodation and a sense of family, which was in no way reciprocated by him.

- 4.1.7 As the relationship developed, without her knowing it, Tara would, as explained by Hennessey<sup>41</sup>, have found that ‘in her head is no longer her own voice or reasoning but the voice of the skilled abuser who has begun to influence her thoughts and opinions’. He would get inside her thought processes and replace them with his world view. If Tara ever tried to challenge his ‘bad behaviour’, he would challenge her worldview. She was a young, inexperienced girl, who had not yet learned about life. He challenged what she thought was right and wrong.
- 4.1.8 A really important aspect of Marcus’s abuse of Tara was his sense of ‘ownership’ of her. We see that, despite his many infidelities and their times of separation, he continued to ‘own’ Tara and would come back to her when it suited him to do so.
- 4.1.9 As we look at the evidence presented to this review, we can see that Marcus had a propensity to deflect blame. For example, during the Family Court hearing, Marcus was cross-examined and conceded that he had been unfaithful to Tara on numerous occasions, including when he considered himself to be ‘in a relationship with her’. The judge commented that a striking feature of his evidence was his tendency to blame Tara for this, contending that she had driven him to this by not making herself available to him. When asked about the fact that another woman became pregnant in 2016, he said of Tara, ‘she knew what she had done by kicking me out’.
- 4.1.10 When he was asked in cross-examination in the Family Court hearing about the time that he had hit his father, he claimed that he had acted in self-defence. He also used the excuse of self-defence when he talked about the attack on his mother. After his arrest, he claimed that she had been injured when he ‘tried to get her off me’.
- 4.1.11 One of our basic human needs is respect. Tara was not respected by Marcus. This is evident not only from the way that he treated her but, even more by the way that he spoke about her in the Family Court hearing. It was clear that he had no respect for Tara, and she was to him, nothing more than an object to meet his needs and desires.
- 4.1.12 Tara had been brought up in a loving home and therefore believed that her children needed their father in their lives. There were a number of times that Tara said to friends that it was important for her to maintain this relationship. Research has shown that abusers often display an increased interest in their children at the time of separation as a means of maintaining contact with and therefore control over their partners<sup>42</sup>: it is very believable that this was true of Marcus. Marcus knew that, for Tara, having a mother and father together for

---

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, p30

<sup>42</sup> Policing Domestic Violence, Laura Richards, Simon Letchford and Sharon Stratton, 2013, Oxford University Press

her children was so important to her and he used that. He knew that she would take him back because she wanted the children to have a father.

## 4.2 The last few weeks of Tara's life

---

- 4.2.1 Tara had been with Marcus, on and off, for 13 years when she died. Even with the information that we have about the abuse that she experienced over those years, we can see an acceleration and escalation in the final few weeks of her life. We will look at the evidence that we have and try to understand what might have been occurring during this time.
- 4.2.2 In June 2016, Tara went on holiday with her children and their maternal grandparents. Marcus did not go as there was not a place available for him. He conceded to the Family Court that he had been angry that they had been away for Father's Day. Tara's family remember this as a good holiday when Tara enjoyed herself and the family got on well together. Tara was active in the pool and in the sea and there was nothing to suggest that she had sustained any rib fractures.
- 4.2.3 When she returned, she and her children were exposed to an escalation in Marcus's controlling and abusive behaviour towards Tara.
- 4.2.4 During this time, there were repeated arguments about Tara's relationship with Neil, albeit that this 'on-off' relationship had ended some time ago. He had gone through her phone and found material she had tried to hide from him, including the fact that Neil had been texting her a couple of weeks ago.
- 4.2.5 Marcus told Tara's friend that he was 'broken never been so down'. He conceded in cross-examination, in the Family Court, that from that point Neil was 'on his mind' and the subject of Neil 'came up in conversation'.
- 4.2.6 Marcus repeatedly criticised Tara because she had previously had a relationship with Neil, even though he continued to have relationships with other women – spending the weekend before her death in a hotel with another woman.
- 4.2.7 A friend said that it was clear that there was a marked change in Tara following the family holiday that led her to believe that Tara was being 'kept hostage' by Marcus. She had seen Tara at the swimming pool on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2016 when she 'appeared to be very anxious and out of character', rushing the children to get changed and home.
- 4.2.8 A friend invited Tara and her family to her home on 24<sup>th</sup> August. She said that Marcus put Tara down and was critical of her family.
- 4.2.9 In an effort to do this, he began to concentrate his efforts on the area of Tara's life that meant the most to her – her children. On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, Tara telephoned her mother and was hysterical saying that Marcus was going to take the children away. Her mother could hear Marcus in the background shouting,

‘what are you feeling fucking sorry for. It’s me you should be sorry for’. One of her children, in his interview, said that he had heard his dad shouting at his mum. Mum was crying and saying she was sorry. His dad said that she could not be sorry because she had put the man she had cheated with above her children. This is the call that prompted Tara’s mother to call the police, as she was concerned for her safety.

- 4.2.10 On a day, most likely to be in mid-September 2016, Tara was assaulted by Marcus to such an extent that she sustained a serious injury to her arm. This was treated with a ‘cast’ that had been purchased ‘online’. We know that Marcus told the children that Tara had been unfaithful and was not to be trusted. We also know that he brought the children downstairs and re-enacted the alleged accident with the sofa to them.
- 4.2.11 When Tara’s friend visited on 19<sup>th</sup> October, Marcus opened the door and she saw Tara running upstairs. Marcus said, ‘I’m sick of people coming to the fucking door, I’m telling you she doesn’t want to see anyone’. Tara’s friend was of the view that Marcus had stayed home from work to keep an eye on Tara.
- 4.2.12 Tara’s grandmother described how when she saw Tara and Marcus on 19<sup>th</sup> October, Tara was on edge and looked tired, with dark circles under her eyes. She said that Marcus did all the talking and was ‘talking himself up and talking Tara down’. She said that Marcus was seeking to humiliate Tara in front of her.
- 4.2.13 So, what had changed in this time since the holiday? The review would suggest that Marcus could not face the fact that Tara had a close relationship with her mother. His control had, potentially, diminished and he set about seeking to regain that control. Hennessey states that, ‘women are not killed because they are leaving but because the skilled offender feels his entitlement is being denied’<sup>43</sup>.
- 4.2.14 The review acknowledges that Marcus was not charged with murder. He was found guilty of intentionally causing her grievous bodily harm and the violence used against Tara was excessive, therefore it is not unreasonable to refer to research that looks at the high-risk characteristics used to predict dangerousness or risk of homicide or serious assault. If we look at the fourteen characteristics<sup>44</sup>, we can see that we have evidence of eleven of the characteristics, with the possibility of the remaining three.

---

<sup>43</sup> How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser, Hennessey, Atrium, 2012, p149

<sup>44</sup> Domestic Abuse, Homicide and Gender, Monckton-Smith et al, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014



- Previous domestic abuse
- The woman is frightened that she is in serious danger
- Separation or the threat of separation
- Sexual assault
- Threats to kill, or use of, weapon
- ? Threats to kill her or her children
- ? Threats to commit suicide
- Violence, especially escalation in seriousness or frequency
- Pregnancy (especially violence)
- Stepchildren in the home (Marcus's child by another woman often stayed over)
- Stalking or harassment
- Strangulation, simulated or real
- ? Threats to kill loved ones or pets
- Arguments over child contact

### 4.3 The use of drugs and alcohol

---

- 4.3.1 The role of drugs, namely cocaine and alcohol, in this review is very important as the pathologist's finding was that Tara died of cocaine toxicity. The review seeks, in no way, to question the finding of the pathologist that the amount of cocaine found in Tara's blood stream was sufficient to kill her.
- 4.3.2 However, the evidence presented to the inquest, the Family Court hearing, and statements made to the police, does leave a number of unanswered questions about how she ingested the cocaine that led to her death. Also, whether this was a one-off incident or the culmination of a growing dependence on cocaine, as Marcus would suggest.
- 4.3.3 Marcus claimed to the Family Court that Tara had begun taking cocaine in 2012 when she was in a relationship with another man. He then said that when they got back together, they would take cocaine together. He said that she was using increasing amounts of cocaine. The judge in the Family Court noted that the only pieces of evidence that Marcus could bring to support his view was the blood sample taken after her death and his own evidence, which was heavily disputed by her family and friends. He claimed to have between 'five and ten' witnesses who would testify to this, as well as 'messages on his phone' that would demonstrate that she used cocaine, but none were forthcoming as part of the hearing.
- 4.3.4 Tara's family have told the review that he also used a claim of her taking drugs in 2007, when they were in the Family Court to discuss custody and access arrangements. On this occasion, custody was granted to Tara.
- 4.3.5 One of the medical experts suggested that he had only previously come across comparable levels of benzoylecgonine, found in Tara's bloodstream, in those who had engaged in 'drug packing', sometimes referred to as 'mules'. In other words, only in cases where people were poisoned by a significant quantity of cocaine that burst from a package inside the body.

- 4.3.6 The schedule of text messages (over 500 pages, stretching back to 2014) from the mobile phone of Marcus, prepared for the Family Court, is consistent with a man engaged not merely in personal transactions but acquiring quantities that he was clearly mixing and selling<sup>45</sup>. None of these text messages mention that Tara was using cocaine or increasing her use of cocaine.
- 4.3.7 Tara's family and friends struggled to come to terms with the suggestion, by Marcus, that she was a habitual drug user whose drug habit, in those final weeks, got out of hand. This view is also not shared by the Coroner or the Family Court judge. The coroner said, 'I find that Tara was not a drug user to the extent that Marcus wishes to portray her'. He went on to suggest that, given his involvement in buying and selling cocaine, it would be surprising that he had not prevailed on her to take the drug, given his controlling nature.
- 4.3.8 The judge in the Family Court pointed out that in his prepared statement of 25<sup>th</sup> October, Marcus said that Tara had been drinking and taking cocaine on 23<sup>rd</sup> October. In his statement for the Family Court, he made no mention of her taking cocaine on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, but made a general allegation of use 'over the weekend before she died'. When he spoke to his GP on 25<sup>th</sup> November, Marcus appeared to suggest that he was unsure whether she took cocaine or not. He is recorded as saying, 'partner was found dead, thinks she may have taken something as she was depressed.' The judge noted that Marcus claimed to not know for certain if Tara had taken anything. It is also of note that, when Marcus undertook his Google searches<sup>46</sup> immediately before she died, there was no search in respect of cocaine use or suspected cocaine overdose.
- 4.3.9 All of Tara's family and friends rejected the notion that she would have taken this cocaine willingly. One of her friends had said in evidence, 'She never, ever took drugs and was never, ever alcohol dependent. She was not at all aggressive when drunk. I would have loved to have seen her like that. She is just not like that. I can never see her taking drugs. She was so anti-drugs. She never even smoked cannabis.'
- 4.3.10 Marcus had also suggested that Tara had an alcohol problem. The medical experts were clear that the examination of Tara's liver, whilst showing that she had consumed alcohol, was not indicative of her having an alcohol problem and was not damaged or dysfunctional in any way. The toxicological analysis had found no alcohol.
- 4.3.11 The judge in the Family Court said that he was satisfied that, on the balance of probabilities, Tara was more isolated from her family during the time after the holiday in June 2016 because of increasingly controlling and abusive conduct by Marcus towards her, rather than some developing problem with cocaine or excessive alcohol. He said that the evidence presented to the

---

<sup>45</sup> Extract taken from the Coroner's summing up

<sup>46</sup> In his prepared statement on 25<sup>th</sup> October and the police mobile phone analysis, there is evidence of Google searches (over 67 minutes) including 'cold skin', 'pain freezing', 'cold hands feet tongue' and 'the dying process'.

court, in his judgement, reinforced the credibility of the evidence of the family and friends that Tara was not a drug user and would not have taken cocaine willingly.

- 4.3.12 In 2019, following a formal complaint from Tara’s family, the police took further statements from those who were friends of Tara and/or in Marcus’s social group. The people spoken to had not come forward to give evidence at the time of Tara’s death. Neil, with whom Tara had an ‘on off’ relationship for about 7 years, said that Tara had never used drugs as far as he was aware and that, although he smoked cannabis in front of her, she never wanted anything. He added that she was ‘all for her kids’.
- 4.3.13 Those interviewed, talked about parties being held most weekends. One person described the purpose of the parties was to drink, have fun and listen to music. The frequency of the parties dropped off to once every other weekend and happened over a six-year period. Marcus was described as being at the parties fairly regularly, but not all of them, and Tara only attended 2-3 times. It was evident from the descriptions given that these people were friends of Marcus, rather than Tara, and that he would take cocaine to these parties for people who were present. Marcus would attend the parties with women, other than Tara.
- 4.3.14 These people paint different pictures of Tara’s drug use. One person said she never saw Tara take drugs, another said that she was always taking cocaine.
- 4.3.15 This review cannot be any more certain than the inquest or Family Court about whether Tara willingly took the cocaine. What the review can say is that Tara was in a relationship that was coercive and controlling. It cannot be certain the extent to which he controlled Tara but she would often do as he said so it is possible that she took the drugs herself, but being coerced by Marcus. It is also important to remember that, at the time that the drugs were ingested, Tara had been beaten for many hours by Marcus and therefore would not have been in sound mind or able to act of her own freewill.
- 4.3.16 Unfortunately, this leaves Tara’s friends and family with no answers about how she ingested the cocaine. There are only two people who know the answer to that question.

## **4.4 The impact of the domestic abuse on children**

---

- 4.4.1 As has been demonstrated throughout this report that the children suffered prolonged exposure to their father’s physical and verbal abuse towards their mother.
- 4.4.2 One in seven children and young people under the age of 18 live with domestic abuse at some point during their childhood<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup>Radford et al (2011) cited in Nowhere to Turn for Children and Young People, Women’s Aid, 2020

- 4.4.3 It is important to stress that research clearly demonstrates that children are not merely observers of domestic abuse but are victims in their own right. Research undertaken by the Children’s Commissioner<sup>48</sup> highlighted that children that were spoken of living with high levels of tension and unpredictability at home and about how situations could explode at any time. They also spoke about an evolving sense of shame as they began to understand that the chaos and neglect that they took for granted was not the same for all children. The children said that having to find ways to cope meant that they grew up too quickly. The research found that children often became experts at hiding what was happening at home.
- 4.4.4 Research undertaken by CAADA<sup>49</sup> found that children exposed to domestic abuse suffer a range of adverse physical and mental health, social, wellbeing and behavioural effects<sup>50</sup>.
- 4.4.5 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has, for the first time, ensured that children are not considered as witnesses of domestic abuse but as victims. It clearly states that any reference in the Act to a victim includes a child who sees or hears or experiences the effects of the abuse.

## 4.5 What were the barriers to Tara leaving Marcus?

---

- 4.5.1 As we consider the barriers to Tara leaving Marcus, we will also look at the barriers that prevented her from reporting to professionals who could help her, such as the police, or even, on some occasions, telling her friends and family. Whilst the Report Author acknowledges that we cannot be certain about the barriers for Tara, we can learn from other victims and survivors. Research tells us that, on average, a woman will attempt to leave seven times before finally leaving for good.<sup>51</sup>
- 4.5.2 When we look at Tara’s life and her relationship with Marcus, we see that the first time she told anyone about the physical abuse that she was experiencing was in 2005, when he had kicked her in the stomach whilst she was pregnant. We cannot be certain if there had been any physical abuse in the relationship before that time, although it is likely, but there will certainly have been control by Marcus. Even given the seriousness of the assault (the risk to her unborn baby), Tara did not feel able to report this to anyone in authority. Hennessey reminds us that Marcus will have been assessing the possibility of any negative consequences for himself if he behaved badly. Yet, even when the life of the unborn child was at risk, his control over Tara was such that she was not able to tell anyone. He must have felt invincible at this point.
- 4.5.3 We know that living with an abusive partner can erode a person’s self-esteem to the point that they no longer have confidence in themselves, including

---

<sup>48</sup> “Are they shouting because of me?” Voices of children living in households with domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and mental health issues, Children’s Commissioner, July 2018

<sup>49</sup> In plain sight: The evidence from children exposed to domestic abuse, CAADA Research Report, February 2014

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.standffov.org/statistics/>

their ability to survive alone<sup>52</sup>. We must continually remember that Tara had been in this relationship since she was 15 years old.

#### 4.5.4 **She felt that she was trapped**

4.5.5 Hennessey<sup>53</sup> puts forward the view that the sense of being trapped in the relationship is, for Tara, compounded by her efforts to solve the problem of the abuse, even though this is not *her* problem. Even if she wanted to be free, she did not believe that she was entitled to her freedom, and this was because of the lies that Marcus would have told her over and over again. He would have reassured her time and again that she had given up her freedom. She knew, because he had told her, that she made a ‘choice’ when she began the relationship with him and that she made the ‘choice’ to resume the relationship each time. We say ‘choice’ because she had no real choice, he had removed her autonomy from her.

4.5.6 We can see from Tara’s relationship with Marcus that she very rarely reported to the police when he was abusive to her. Given the evidence that we have documented in this review, there is little or no doubt that the abuse, physical and otherwise, continued throughout their relationship, both when they were ‘on’ and when they were ‘off’.

#### 4.5.7 **What would happen when agencies did get involved?**

4.5.8 Many will suggest that a victim will not report to the police, or other agencies, because they fear that nothing would be done and that the risk would increase. It is possible that Tara felt that if she called the police when they were not together that the risk to her was less.

4.5.9 What we can see is that, without any criticism of the police, whenever Tara or other women did report Marcus, there was no sanction against him. Every time there was no sanction against him, his sense of entitlement was reaffirmed. His confidence grew and he believed that he could increase his demands<sup>54</sup>.

#### 4.5.10 **Fear of losing her children**

4.5.11 It is very probable that Marcus would have threatened Tara with what would happen if she told anyone. He would have told her that her children would be taken from her. Since Tara’s death, her children have said that they were always told that they should never tell anyone about what was happening because ‘they would be split up’.

4.5.12 We know that, in early August 2016, Tara telephoned her mother and was hysterical saying that Marcus was going to take the children away. Whilst

---

<sup>52</sup> Policing Domestic Violence, Laura Richards, Simon Letchford and Sharon Stratton, 2013, Oxford University Press

<sup>53</sup> How He Gets Into Her Head: The Mind of the Male Intimate Abuser, Hennessey, Atrium, 2012, p145

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p121

there is no evidence of other instances, it seems unlikely that this would be the first time it had happened.

- 4.5.13 In June 2014, all the fears that Tara may have had about potentially having her children taken away began to come true. In May, Tara had reported an altercation to police. She would have assumed that this was the end of the matter but, unbeknown to her at this time, a referral was made to the MASH domestic abuse meeting and, following that meeting, a referral was sent to CSC. Because of the previous calls to the police, Tara now met the threshold for an initial assessment: she was contacted by CSC and an initial assessment was undertaken.
- 4.5.14 Whilst the review does not suggest that CSC should not have intervened – protecting children is their main priority – the review highlights, as do many other DHRs, the fear that the public have about CSC. Whilst CSC consider, in their IMR, that Tara was given the opportunity to disclose concerns and seek support, this is not how Tara would have viewed this meeting. She would have been terrified that her children were going to be taken away and would have been seeking to say exactly what she thought they needed to hear.
- 4.5.15 We have seen in the CSC IMR that she was considered, on more than one occasion, to have taken appropriate steps to protect her children. She was set on protecting her children. It is of no surprise that Tara did not report to the police again.

**The review considers that there is much work to be done in improving the confidence of the public and victims of domestic abuse in the work of CSC to assist them in protecting their children and working with them to keep them safe. The review considers that, whilst there may be work that Nottinghamshire can do in this area, this is a national recommendation which needs to be led by central government.**

#### **Recommendation Seven**

**It is recommended that the Department for Education develops an effective, national campaign to change the view of CSC's role in supporting victims of domestic abuse. Also, that resources and training are provided to social workers to assist when carrying out these assessments.**

## Section Five – Lessons Learned

---

### 5.1 Nottinghamshire Police

- 5.1.1 There were grounds for changing the interventions offered to those victims assessed as being at MEDIUM risk. The additional interventions that are being offered are noted.

### 5.2 Children’s Social Care

- 5.2.1 If contact details are given for support agencies, this should be recorded in the notes.

### 5.3 South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership

- 5.3.1 The review has reinforced the understanding among professionals that coercive and controlling behaviour is the most hidden and, therefore, difficult to identify aspect of domestic abuse, but its effects are no less for a victim. Marcus stripped away Tara’s freedom to choose for herself how she lived her life.

## Section Six – Recommendations

---

### 6.1 South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership

6.1.1 That the Community Safety Partnership ensures that training on coercive control is provided to all new staff in the local authority and that the provision of the training is extended to cover all agencies within the Community Safety Partnership<sup>55</sup>.

### 6.2 Nottinghamshire Police

6.2.1 That Nottinghamshire Police provides reassurance to the CSP that evidence led prosecutions are now considered more robustly in all domestic abuse cases.

### 6.3 Nottinghamshire County Council – Children’s Social Care

6.3.1 That CSC ensures that social work teams have up-to-date information to give to families in respect of support services for victims of domestic abuse.

6.3.2 Given the time since the IMR was written, that CSC provides reassurance to the CSP that this is now routine and provide an explanation about how this reassurance has been arrived at.

6.3.3 That CSC are more persistent in contacting agencies if parents refuse as part of an initial assessment or where the concerns are significant enough for this to be done without consent. The review acknowledges that CSC works with parents to understand the importance of sharing information with their consent to support the protection of their children.

### 6.4 National Government

6.4.1 That the Government considers adopting the “Ask and Act” Policy that is in place in Wales.

6.4.2 That the Department for Education develops an effective, national campaign to change the view of CSC’s role in supporting victims of domestic abuse. Also, that resources and training are provided to social workers to assist when carrying out these assessments.

---

<sup>55</sup>The review notes that this has already begun to be delivered.



## Section Seven - Conclusions

---

- 7.1 The facts formally recorded in this case show that Tara died as a result of a drugs overdose. However, that masks the reality of her life. The evidence contained within this review makes it clear that she suffered domestic abuse at the hands of her long-term partner. That abuse consisted of significant levels of violence and was controlling and coercive in its many forms. Immediately before her death, Tara was subjected to an extremely violent assault by her partner. Although the medical evidence was unable to conclude that the assault contributed to her death, the injuries were so severe that, upon conviction for grievous bodily harm, the perpetrator received a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment. The post-mortem found that there were defensive wounds on each of Tara's arms. Tara's family can, hopefully, take some comfort in knowing that, despite the horrific attack upon her by Marcus, she put up a fight.
- 7.2 Tara suffered varying types of domestic abuse over several years. She undoubtedly did what she thought was best to try and protect herself and her young family. That included, at times, minimising the level of violence with her friends and family and 'putting up' with the other abuse to which she was subjected. None of this was her fault and this review has sought to understand those actions in order to help other victims make themselves safer. A better level of understanding of what motivates those who continue to suffer appalling abuse can only help us all improve our response and services for others. The review has sought to always keep to the fore the fact that when fear and control is present, the word of a victim or a perpetrator cannot always be taken as the truth.
- 7.3 Tara's mother and stepfather spoke eloquently and passionately to this review. All those who heard their experience were moved to learn from this case to try and better protect others who suffer in a similar way to Tara. We believe the recommendations from this review will help others. The review extends its sympathies to Tara's family.

## Appendix One – Terms of Reference<sup>56</sup>

---

### Terms of Reference for Operation Hind

#### Terms of Reference (TOR) for the review:

The following Terms of Reference (TOR) are considered by the Review Panel to be proportionate to the nature of the homicide; there may be a need to vary the TORs as the review progresses:

- Engagement with family and friends of the victim and with the perpetrator will be the responsibility of the Chair of the review
- The Chair of the review will also be the initial contact point for responding to media interest about the review

The review will:

- Seek the involvement of Tara’s family and friends and Marcus, to provide a robust analysis of what happened
- Invite responses from agencies or individuals identified through the process and requested Individual Management Reviews (IMRs) from each one that was involved with Tara and with Marcus
- Consider each agency’s involvement with Tara and Marcus between 12<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and the date of Tara’s death on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2016 – subject to any information emerging that prompted a review of any earlier incidents or events that were relevant
- Consider each agency’s involvement with previous partners in as much as it pertains to the review
- Determine how matters concerning family, the public and media should be managed before, during and after the review and who should take responsibility for it
- Take account of coroner’s or criminal proceedings (including disclosure issues) in terms of timing and contact with Tara’s family and friends to ensure that relevant information could be shared without incurring significant delay in the review process or compromise to the judicial process
- Consider whether the Review Panel needed to obtain independent legal advice about any aspect of the review

---

<sup>56</sup> These terms of reference were set by the previous Chair and panel.

- Ensure that the review process took account of lessons learned from research and previous Domestic Homicide Reviews.

The review will address whether:

- The incident in which Tara died was an isolated event or whether there were any warning signs, and if more could be done to raise awareness of services available to victims of domestic abuse
- There were any barriers experienced by Tara or her family/friends/colleagues in reporting any abuse in South Nottinghamshire, or elsewhere, including whether they knew how to report domestic abuse should they have wanted to
- Tara had experienced abuse in previous relationships in South Nottinghamshire, or elsewhere, and whether this experience impacted on her likelihood of seeking support in the months before she died
- There were opportunities for professionals to 'routinely enquire' as to any domestic abuse experienced by Tara that were missed
- Marcus had any previous history of abusive behaviour to an intimate partner, a relative or a co-habitee, and whether this was known to any agencies
- There were opportunities for agency intervention in relation to domestic abuse regarding Tara and Marcus or to dependent children that were missed
- Training or awareness raising requirements that are necessary to ensure a greater knowledge and understanding of domestic abuse processes and/or services in the region were identified
- There were any equality and diversity issues that appear pertinent to Tara and Marcus and any dependent children e.g. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In addition, the review will seek to find answers to the following three questions raised by Tara's mother and stepfather:

- Were any of the reports of violence against women ever tied to previous incidents with other women?
- In 2014, was a search into his previous history undertaken? Would Nottinghamshire Social Services have dropped the case as easily if they had been aware of the reports associated with his previous partner?

- In 2016, was a search into previous history undertaken? Having removed him from the property in 2014, why did the police not inform Social Services that he was back at the home?

## Appendix Two – Ongoing professional development of Chair and Report Author<sup>57</sup>

---

- 2.1 Christine has attended:
- AAFDA Information and Networking Event (November 2019)
  - Webinar by Dr Jane Monckton-Smith on the Homicide Timeline (June 2020)
  - Review Consulting Ltd Webinar on 'Ensuring the Family Remains Integral to Your Reviews' (June 2020)
  - Domestic Abuse: Mental health, Trauma and Selfcare, Standing Together (July 2020)
- 2.2 Christine has completed the Homicide Timeline Online Training (Five Modules) led by Professor Jane Monckton-Smith of University of Gloucester.
- 2.3 Gary and Christine have:
- Attended the AAFDA Annual Conference (March 2017)
  - Attended training on the statutory guidance update in (2016)
  - Undertaken Home Office approved training (April/May 2017)
  - Attended the AAFDA Annual Conference (March 2018)
  - Attended Conference on Coercion and Control (Bristol, June 2018)
  - Attended AAFDA Learning Event (Bradford, September 2018)
  - Attended AAFDA Annual Conference (March 2019)

---

<sup>57</sup> As at time of writing.