

Executive Summary



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

July 2023

Author – Jackie Dadd

Date completed – July 2024

Family Tribute

A tribute to a shining star that was my sister.

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

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

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

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

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

Her Sister x

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

Contents

1.	The Review process	4
2.	Review panel members	5
3.	Contributors to the review	6
4.	Author of the Overview report and Chair	7
5.	Terms of Reference	7
6.	Summary Chronology	8
7.	Key issues arising from the review	12
8.	Conclusions	13
9.	Lessons to be learnt	15
10.	Recommendations	15

1. The review process

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

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

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

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

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

Graham – Partner of Crystal. A 58-year-old white Irish male. Ex-police officer in Southern Ireland.

Annabel – Older sister of Crystal.

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

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

Kate – Long term friend of Crystal.

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

1.6 Annabel was sent a letter by Huntingdonshire CSP shortly after the commissioning of the DARDR to inform her of the review and provide details of AAFDA for support. She was then visited by the Author at her home address as was her preference and during this time, was provided with the Home Office leaflet and had the advocacy of AAFDA fully explained and an offer for referral was made. Annabel declined this at the time and it was re-visited on

further occasions when the author spoke, emailed or met with her. Annabel was also offered to attend a panel meeting but declined as she was content with the authors updates.

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

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

2. Review panel members

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

2.2 The panel comprised of the following:

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

2.3 All members of the panel and authors of the reports and chronologies have complete independence from any subject in this review. The Review Chair and Panel gave due consideration for the content of the DARDR and it was agreed that reports, chronologies and other supplementary details would form the basis of the information provided. Thanks goes to all who have assisted and contributed to this review with their valued time and cooperation.

3. Contributors to the review

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

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

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

Change Grow Live (CGL)

Cambridgeshire Adult Social Care (ASC)

National Probation Service

Cambridge and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT)

Department of Works and Pensions – DWP

Cambridgeshire IDVA Service

Impakt Housing

Cambridgeshire Children's Social Care

Refuge (National Database searched)

4. Author of the Overview report and Chair

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

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

5. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were discussed and agreed upon during the second panel meeting on 1st November 2023 as it was felt that there wasn't sufficient information available to complete this during the first panel meeting.

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

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

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

The full Terms of Reference are below:

- The panel are not to be restricted by dates and to scope if any information is held on Crystal or Graham within Cambridgeshire.
- This is to be reviewed as a suicide based on the investigation by appropriate authorities. The purpose is to establish if DA was a contributory factor in the death of Crystal.
- Ensure the review seeks to involve the family in the process and takes account of who the family may wish to have involved as lead members. Identify any other people the family think may assist or be relevant in the review process.
- Seek the involvement of employers and friends to provide contextualised analysis of the events.

- Establish accessibility of services for those contemplating suicide and whether training has been received in relation to the effects DA may have towards this.
- What information is available to professionals and employers within Cambridgeshire in regard to domestic abuse and suicide. What training have they had and what policies do they have in place to be able to respond to any disclosures from employees.
- Were procedures sensitive to the ethnic, cultural, and religious identity of Crystal. Were any of the other protected characteristics relevant in this case?
- Identify and highlight good practice for wider sharing
- Do communications and publications within Cambridgeshire provide sufficient accessibility to information for the public in relation to domestic abuse including HBA
- Panel to have a parallel action plan if required for expedited implementation where practicable during the review

6. Summary chronology

6.1 Very little information was held on agency records for either Crystal or Graham. Information about Crystal's personal life that is not on agencies records has been provided by her sister, Annabel and her friends.

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

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

6.4 When Crystal was 15 years of age, she worked for an insurance company and got talking to a white male called Robert who was a year older than her who also worked there. Crystal lived near to where Robert caught the bus. They began a relationship but Robert describes the relationship as 'always in the shadows' as Crystal was fearful of the ramifications if her father found out, so he always left her when they were just round the corner from her house.

6.5 They became 'serious' a year later. Annabel states that Crystal and Robert were unable to have a proper relationship due to Crystal's religion and they kept the relationship quiet because of the culture they lived in.

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

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

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

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

6.10 Doctor's records show that Crystal was treated for depression from 1990-1992. They managed to get a house together around this time but Robert states the relationship was already ending the day they moved in.

6.11 Crystal began to get back on her feet, got a job with a fabric company and became more confident, eventually moving to a rental property in Wembley Park and her career started to go from strength to strength.

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

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

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

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

6.16 Crystal and Graham began to move locations further and further away from London. Doctors records confirm this. During these years, (Annabel is not sure of the actual year), Graham's daughter had a child whilst in her school years. Things were a bit of a challenge but Crystal did all she could to help.

6.17 In 2015, Crystal came back into contact with Robert as he had messaged her on LinkedIn and they met up once and messaged infrequently. At one stage, Crystal text Robert that they would be back together within a year but this never happened.

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

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

6.20 Huntingdonshire District Council records show that Graham and Crystal became owners of a house in their area in September 2021.

6.21 In August 2022, Crystal's mother died. Crystal hadn't been herself for some time. About a month later, She rang Annabel crying and told her that Graham had "hit me again" whilst watching a TV programme and that she had put a cushion over her head to stop facial injuries. She said that she was going to leave him but needed money to pay him off as

although she had bought the house, it was in both of their names. Crystal stated that she did not want the police involved and Annabel felt that she could not contact anyone against her wishes as it would alienate her from the family.

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

6.23 On Christmas day, 2022, Robert received a text from Crystal stating that she had 'the worst Xmas day ever'. This had been the last contact he received from Crystal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.34 Annabel met Kate by chance about a month after Crystal's death and when they spoke, they realised that Crystal had described different incidents to them of when Graham had beat her and realised that this may have happened more frequently than Crystal had stated.

7. Key issues arising from the review

Provision availability for so-called HBA

Honour based abuse is prevalent throughout the country but is a hidden crime due to the secrecy and loyalty aspects that surround it from family and community members. The leaving increases risk and can leave the victim feeling isolated and alone with no-one to turn to. Provisions and support are not readily available across the country and rely on funding. The Dahlia project in Peterborough is only funded for that area and research already shows that there is a demand for this provision across Cambridgeshire.

Support at an early stage can help shape the rest of the victims life and could have made a difference and assisted Crystal.

The use of Clare's Law to assess risk

Clare's Law has been available since 2014 yet it is still not widely known about in the public domain and professionals are still not considering it as a safeguarding tool and offering it to victims as an option. The panel discussed that culture can be an additional barrier to seeking help and that a focus to promote Clare's Law should be made in communities that are

difficult to engage with to ensure that if they are concerned over a friend or loved one, then they can take positive action to try and help them.

8. Conclusions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.8 With the lack of agency involvement, the panel have identified domestic abuse towards Crystal through direct disclosures from Crystal to family and friends and their observations, although these are few due to Crystal's private nature. The possibility of economic abuse was considered due to Crystal paying off Graham's debts, using her money to fund the nursery for his grandchild, being the main wage earner in the family, the reduction of her funds and savings from the time she met Graham and the purchase of the home which was put in joint names. However, the panel respect the observations of Annabel that Crystal did this willingly due to her generous personality, even if she may have later regretted this and therefore have not found evidence of economic abuse.

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

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

8.11 The panel concluded that there may have been a number of contributing factors in Crystal taking her own life. She had suffered from depression on and off throughout her life although not always seeking medical attention for this. The loss of her mother who she loved dearly and the turbulent relationship with her brother in the months leading up to Crystal's death, culminating in potentially not receiving inheritance at a time when she needed it, may have all impacted her state of mind. However, the comments to Annabel in relation to her thinking about leaving Graham during covid through to the same state of mind, almost appearing desperate in her final text to her sister, stating that she wanted to start a new life but not having the money to do so brings the panel to the conclusion that the domestic abuse she was receiving was a contributory factor in Crystal taking her own life.

9. Lessons to be learnt

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

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

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

NOK considerations following the death of a domestic abuse victim

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

10. Recommendations

National

There is no national recommendation identified from this review

Local

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

