COVENTRY CITY
COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Domestic Abuse Related Death Report (DARDR)

Executive Summary

Name of Deceased: Aaliyah

Date of Death: October 2021

Independent Chair and Author: Carolyn Carson

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"My sister Aaliyah, the youngest of 7, or as she was always called, my little sister.

We did everything together. From playing and climbing, collecting apples for our garden den to walking to school together. For as long as I can remember we were always together.

Aaliyah was funny, she loved hard and hurt harder. Growing up she loved a tv show from Eastenders to Sunset Beach. She loved books, she was an avid reader from such a young age, she loved Sydney Sheldon books and watching movies. We loved the movie Con Air so much, Con became her nickname. Hers for me was Fatty, she still called it me. The only one that still did even in our later years.

Losing our dad suddenly at only 14 for her, was tremendously difficult, more so than I realised at the time. We all deal with grief differently, so we tried in our own ways. For Aaliyah, it was rebellious at points, not channelling her emotions in what was perhaps the best ways in situations.

Aaliyah had her fair share of trying times and difficult situations. At times it was hard to get through to her, she held onto so much but always wanted to do and be better. She tried, however long it lasted, she tried. And now she doesn't have the opportunity to try any longer.

Instead, she leaves her child, a daily reminder of her. From cheeky quips to the glasses – her child will forever be a blessing and a connection to my little sister."

1 Introduction

1.1 This report into a death in unexplained circumstances examines agency responses and support given to Aaliyah, a resident of Coventry, prior to travelling to Pakistan

where she died unexpectedly, in October 2021.

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

1.3 The Review Chair and domestic abuse related death review (DARDR), panel send their sincere condolences to Aaliyah's child, family, and friends. Aaliyah's family have driven the decision to conduct this review and have chosen the pseudonyms used in this report.

1.4 The victim in this case is Aaliyah, a British citizen born in England to first generation Pakistani immigrants. At the time of her death, she was 35 years old and separated from her husband Sauron, a citizen of rural Pakistan with whom she had been married for 8 years. Aaliyah had travelled to Pakistan for family reasons and whilst there, she stated her intention to divorce Sauron, her first cousin with whom they shared the same family. On the day Aaliyah made plans to return home, she fell unexpectedly ill and died on the way to hospital. She did not reach hospital but was returned to the family village and buried quickly in line with Pakistani, rural, cultural tradition. There was no investigation into the circumstances of Aaliyahs very sudden death in Pakistan, nor by the British Police as requested by the family at the time. In consequence, it has not been possible to establish a cause of death, to date.

1.5 The key purpose for undertaking domestic abuse related death reviews is to enable lessons to be learned from homicides where a person is killed as a result of domestic violence and abuse. In Aaliyahs case, it is not possible to state how she died and so it cannot be stated that she was subject to a domestic abuse related death. However, due to Aaliyahs family fighting to get her voice heard and circumstances examined, Coventry City Community Safety Partnership agreed to undertake this review. This was a very positive course of action in support of the family despite the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR), definition for when to conduct a statutory DHR[1], not being met due to it not being possible to prove Aaliyah died from violence, abuse or neglect.

[1] Under section 9(1) of the 2004 Act, domestic homicide review means 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 child to whom he was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or (person a member of the same household as himself, held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death.
Where the definition set out in this paragraph has been met, then a Domestic Homicide Review should be undertaken.

1.6 For potential lessons to be learned as widely and thoroughly as possible, professionals need to be able to understand fully what happened in the lead up to Aaliyah choosing to travel to Pakistan. Most importantly, an understanding of what needs to change to reduce the risk of such tragedies happening in the future. This review is seeking to examine the role of agencies who encountered Aaliyah and her husband Sauron, to establish if there are any lessons to be learned as a result of any engagement, or to identify missed opportunities for agency engagement.

1.7 Timescales

- Aaliyah died in October 2021and Aaliyahs family unable to repatriate her body or commence an investigation in Pakistan. Also, the UK police declined to open an investigation into Aaliyah's death.
- On the 20th of April 2023, on behalf of Aaliyahs family. AAFDA[2] approached the Coventry Community Safety Partnership (CCSP), to request a DARDR.
- On the 13th of July 2023, the CCSP agreed to conduct a DARDR.
- June 2024: Replacement DARDR Chair engaged following withdrawal through illness of initial Independent Chair; and DARDR fully recommenced.

1.8 Confidentiality

The findings of each review are confidential. Information is available only to participating professionals and their line managers. To ensure confidentiality, the victim of the Domestic Abuse Related Death Review is referred to as Aaliyah and her husband, Sauron, as chosen by Aaliyahs family.

2 Terms of Reference

2.1 For effective learning the scoping period for this review was agreed to be from July 2018 until Aaliyahs death in October 2021, although due to the nature of the circumstances of Aaliyahs death, the scope will extend to cover the events after her death. The specific areas for consideration within this DARDR were agreed to be:

- An examination as to whether interventions and services offered were appropriate and whether they had sufficient focus/appreciation of Domestic

[2] AAFDA: Advocacy after fatal domestic abuse: https://aafda.org.uk/public/help-for-families AAFDA draw on personal and professional experience of major criminal justice processes like Domestic Homicide Reviews, and other related inquiries to provide emotional, practical and specialist peer support to those left behind after fatal domestic homicide.

Abuse.

- Consideration of how risks were identified, the changing risks and effective management of them.

- The effectiveness of information sharing between agencies.

- The application of professional curiosity of professionals involved with the family, including a consideration of bias, assumptions and the use of language.

- How agencies considered the risk of honour-based violence, potentially due to Aaliyah's substance use, choice to divorce and criminal prosecution.

- Exploration of the case through an appropriate cultural lens and consideration as to whether agencies were culturally competent in the issues and risks in this case.

3 Methodology

3.1 The Serious Incident Learning Process (SILP) model of review was commissioned to be used within this domestic abuse related death review process. SILP is a learning model, tried and tested in safeguarding reviews for both children's and adult's cases, including domestic homicide reviews, and takes account of the DHR principles enshrined in government guidance. The process seeks to engage front line staff and their managers in reviewing cases, together with statutory partners and specialist agencies, to focus on why those involved acted in a certain way at the time. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to include practitioners in this review due to agencies not being able to provide resources and time, having 13 additional open DARDR's within Coventry, currently.

3.2 Resource Implications for local authorities managing DARDR's are acknowledged by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner in their report 'Learning from Loss[3]', published in July 2025. In Coventry, it has been a challenge to ensure full panel attendance by key statutory agencies, and particularly the police. Their workload has prevented a timely completion of the DARDR and the postponement of the learning event, causing additional distress to Aaliyah's brother who had agreed to attend. It has also delayed a timely completion of the Overview Report. Non-statutory agencies have fully engaged however, and this

[3] https://domesticabusecommissioner.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Learning-from-Loss.pdf

is acknowledged and appreciated, together with acknowledgement of their frustrations at the lack of statutory agency attendance at times.

3.3 Once the review was commissioned, an initial scoping meeting and first panel meeting was held, where agency representation, terms of reference, the scoping period and the project plan were agreed. The meeting schedule was as follows:

- 1st Scoping Meeting (13/07/2023)
- Meeting with victim's brother
- 2nd Scoping Meeting (February 2024)
- Authors Briefing (March 2024)
- Panel Meeting (March 2025)
- Panel / Learning Event (March 2025)
- Recall / Panel (August 2025)
- Sign-off Meeting (November 2025)

3.4 Whilst applying the principles of the SILP methodology, the independent chair and author has followed the Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews[4], as amended in December 2016. Importantly, the model has incorporated a sufficient number of meetings, panel and with individual agencies, in this case for the panel to effectively support the review and to discharge their duties, albeit with time delays.

4 Involvement of Family, Friends and Wider Community

4.1 Aaliyah's family have received much support from AAFDA who have been with them throughout the process. Aaliyah is one of 7 siblings. Her youngest brother has been the representative to the review process. Her youngest sister has provided the pen picture used at the start of this report. Aaliyahs family have worked very hard to ensure Aaliyah has a voice, supported by AAFDA, as has this review, with their support.

4.2 Aaliyah's brother has engaged directly with both the previous Chair, from whom he was made aware of the terms of reference, and with the current Chair who has ensured he is updated regularly personally, with the support of AAFDA. Aaliyah's brother has met the review panel and attended a panel / learning event in person and attended all subsequent panel meetings held on-line. He has received all versions of the report to review. His engagement and support for the review are much appreciated.

[4] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a80be88e5274a2e87dbb923/DHR-Statutory-Guidance-161206.pdf

4.3 Sadly, Aaliyahs wider network of friends and neighbours did not wish to engage with the review and due to no initial police investigation, there are no supporting witness statements available to the review.

4.4 I**nvolvement of Sauron**

The review has not been able to have any contact with Aaliyah's estranged husband, Sauron. Aaliyah's brother has represented the wider family.

5 DARDR Panel and Contributors[5] to the Review

5.1

NAME	AGENCY	STATUS	IMR or Summary Report
Carolyn Carson	Independent	Chair and Author	
Jayne Ross	Coventry City Council	Domestic Abuse Programme Manager	
Mahdiyyah Khalifa	Coventry City Council	Population Health Policy Project	
	West Midlands Police	Panel Member	IMR
	NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board- Primary Care	Panel Member Report Author	IMR
	Probation Service	Panel Member	Contributed relevant information and professional expertise through panel attendance.
	Change, Grow, Live	Panel Member Report Author	Summary
	Coventry City Councils Children's Service	Panel Member	IMR
	Coventry Haven	Panel Member Report	Summary

[5] Following discussion at panel meetings, Coventry would prefer to omit the names of individual panel members in line with the proposed changes to DHR guidance due later in 2025.

	University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust	Panel Member Report	Summary
	Panahghar	Specialist Support to panel	Provided specialist professional insight
	Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust	Panel	Contributed relevant information and professional expertise through panel attendance.

6 Author and Chair of the DARDR and Overview Report

6.1 Carolyn Carson is an Independent Safeguarding Reviewer and has undertaken DHR's across England and Wales since 2013. Carolyn retired as a Police Superintendent in 2011, having specialised extensively in Safeguarding through her service, at both a practitioner and senior manager level. Carolyn served in, and remains based in, Leicestershire. As such, she has not worked directly with any of the agencies involved with Aaliyah and agencies local to Coventry City. Carolyn successfully completed the revised Chairs training provided by AAFDA in October 2024.

7 Parallel Reviews

7.1 There are no parallel reviews in this case due to there being no police investigations or Coroners Inquiries in Pakistan or the UK, to date.

8 Equality and Diversity

8.1 The Review Panel has considered all protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 for Aaliyah and Sauron, and has identified the existence of sex and gendered honour-based abuse and issues of race and ethnicity to be relevant to this review. The panel has also identified that vulnerabilities to consider should include issues of trauma, mental health and problematic drug and alcohol use. The impact on Aaliyah in consequence of child protection procedures has also been considered.

8.2 Aaliyah was British born, of Pakistani heritage. Her mother and father came to the UK before Aaliyah was born. Their family originally came from a small rural village in Kashmir, Pakistan and many family members still live there in a united

compound and have direct contact with Aaliyahs family. Aaliyah, who was westernised, grew up in a patriarchal household. Her father grew up in a neighbouring village to Aaliyah's mother.

8.3 Sauron was Aaliyahs first cousin, their mothers being sisters. He is the same age as Aaliyah. Whilst in Pakistan, Sauron did not receive an education, and he could not speak or read English throughout the scope of the review. He came from a patriarchal culture. Very little is known about Sauron through this review. Agency information includes that he had a gambling habit and potentially used the services of escort agencies. It was an important personal ambition for Sauron to be in the UK for a better life and to provide financial support to relatives in Pakistan.

8.4 Assessing Aaliyah through the lens of Intersectionality presents a complex individual, shaped by the early death of her father very suddenly from a diabetic seizure which caused him to fall and hit his head, killing him, when Aalyiah was with him at 14 years old. This resulted in Aaliyah suffering trauma and depression, and the development of OCD[6] and mood swings. To cope, Aaliyah began experimenting with drugs and consuming alcohol at a point when her elder siblings started to leave home, leaving her more isolated. Her resulting behaviour created family pressure to take her to Pakistan when she was 25 years of age to remove her from her situation for a while. Whilst in Pakistan, an agreed arranged marriage to Sauron took place, and their child was born the following year. Sauron did not come to the UK until 2018.

8.5 This resulted in Aaliyah, an outgoing British girl, marrying a patriarchal, uneducated first cousin with whom she could only converse in his language; and provide support for him to adapt to living in England and ensure his spousal visa.

9 Dissemination

9.1 Once agreement for the final report has been given by the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel, an Executive Summary of this DARDR report will be available on the Coventry Council website. The report will be suitably anonymised to protect the dignity and privacy of the family and to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998.

9.2 Upon publication, all partner agencies, locally or nationally, will be made aware, and the action plan will be shared with the agencies involved. In addition, a copy

[6] OCD: Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder , a condition characterized by repeated unwanted thoughts and repetitive behaviours. OCD - Search

of the final report will be provided to the Office for Police and Crime Commissioner and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

9.3 The review has been assured by Coventry City Council that the learning will be disseminated by means of partnership training and developed guidance.

9.4 Aaliyah's family have been provided the opportunity to review the Overview Report and Action Plan, and comment appropriately.

10 Background Information to Aaliyah's death

10.1 The brief circumstances are that Aaliyah married Sauron in 2012, in Pakistan, and their child was born in 2013. Sauron did not come to the UK until the Spring of 2018. Prior to this there was only phone contact whilst he remained abroad. Phone contact was necessary to evidence regular contact for a spousal visa application. Aaliyah took the child abroad to meet Sauron on a few occasions prior to the visa being granted. Aaliyah's family report that the relationship seemed strained and seen to deteriorate from the start, being visible to family and friends within a matter of months of Sauron arriving in the UK.

10.2 Sauron adhered to his cultural upbringing, holding traditional family expectations. He did not approve of Aaliyahs drinking alcohol or going out with friends and their relationship broke down due to arguments about this and money. Sadly, Aaliyah's dependency on alcohol and substances, together with numerous police call outs for reports of domestic abuse from Sauron's abusive behaviour, resulted in child court proceedings making the decision to remove her child for placement with one of her sisters. Aaliyah's family considered her behaviour to be the cause of her child being placed away from her. Aaliyah and Sauron separated. Sadly, Aaliyah proving unable to fully manage her drug addiction, ensured the court upheld their decision, and her child was placed with their maternal Aunt, long term.

10.3 The decision of the court occurred during the covid lock-down during which Aaliyah lived alone. Aaliyah and Sauron remained in contact and in August 2021, Sauron talked her into going to Pakistan, alone, on a one-way ticket paid for by his employer, for a family event. In Pakistan, Aaliyah had a poor relationship with Sauron's family, and she stated her intention to divorce when she returned home.

10.4 Aaliyah had been isolated in Pakistan, having broken her smart phone and living in a remote compound with her and Sauron's wider family. She asked her friend to transfer the funds for a return flight, and her brother believes it was booked; he having later found evidence of the transfer of £800 in funds. Aaliyah texted her sister to collect her from the airport on the day she was planning to return, due on the 1st of November 2021. Sadly, on the day Aaliyah sent the text request to be collected, she allegedly fell ill and died on the 10th of October 2021, unexpectedly.

10.5 Through the relationship there were several reports of domestic abuse to the police during the scoping period, commencing in October 2018, all of which were reported to Children's Social Care to protect their child. All reports were assessed as both Aaliyah and Sauron being equally to blame for the abuse and on one occasion, both were arrested. There were no prosecutions, and Sauron did not hold a criminal record.

10.6 Aaliyah had received a caution for an offence of theft in 2018 and a few days after her child was placed away from her, she committed an offence of burglary to which she pleaded guilty, and for which she was due to be sentenced in November 2025, after she returned from Pakistan.

11 Chronology of Significant Events

11.1 **18/07/2018:** Aaliyah arrested for theft of a bank card from a medical centre. Aaliyah stated that she was having a hard time, suffered with depression and was the victim of domestic abuse. Completed a victim awareness course and received a caution.

11.2 **19/08/18**: Children's Social Care (CSC), completed a Children & Families Assessment following Aaliyah's child disclosing to a member of nursery staff that Daddy hit mummy.

11.3 **20/08/2018:** Amber MASH referral due to concerns that Aaliyah drank heavily and had tested positive for drug consumption. There were concerns for possible domestic abuse between their child's parents. A strategy discussion in MASH was requested.

11.4 **03.10.2018:** Domestic Abuse Incident. Aaliyah reported to CSC that Sauron had smacked a plate out of her hand and Aaliyah asked him to leave. A child safety plan was agreed with support from trusted family members.

11.5 **04/11/2018:** GP referral for Aaliyahs mental health.

11.6 **10/11/18:** Aaliyah attended the Emergency Department following a fall onto her back resulting in right elbow pain. Accompanied by husband.

11.6 **10/11/18:** Aaliyah called police to report that her mother had taken her child and assaulted her. Filed no further action due to Aaliyah being drunk and not wanting to make a formal statement and one witness stating Aaliyah was aggressive.

11.7 **10/11/18:** CSC record a domestic abuse incident where Aaliyah recorded as having offended against her mother.

11.8 **22/11/18:** Change, Grow, Live (CGL), undertook a personalised assessment. Aaliyah had her arm in a cast due to a fractured elbow allegedly caused by her mother[7].

11.9 **06/12/18 to 14/01/2019**: CSC monitored child's safety plan. Concerns were that both Aaliyah and Sauron minimised the harm to their child by their fighting.

11.10 **24/01/19:** CGL conducted full risk review.

11.11 **25/01/2019:** MASH report from police that Aaliyah had left home after an argument and Sauron walked the streets to find her with their child, cold and wet.

11.12 **07/02/2019:** A verbal argument and physical altercation took place between Aaliyah and Sauron. It was reported that Aaliyah was intoxicated, and Sauron had hit, kicked and shouted at her.

11.13 **11/02/19:** Aaliyahs social worker recorded a call from maternal aunt to say they were extremely concerned for the child's welfare and that the family were looking at getting mum sectioned under the metal health act as mum's behaviour is irrational. She's currently drinking heavily and has left her child home alone on several occasions.

11.14 **08/03/19:** Aaliyah called 999 to report Sauron had grabbed her by the throat. Aaliyah was hysterical and very, very, angry. An argument occurred after Aaliyah had been out drinking and this was the cause of tension. Aaliyah stated he grabbed her neck and in defence, she grabbed his clothes and ripped his shirt. She wanted him arresting for strangling her. Sauron stated Aaliyah had woken him up and attacked her, ripped his clothes and had scratches to his hands. Sauron arrested, Aaliyah would not press charges. Case filed no further action. DASH assessment – standard risk. Incident referred to MASH.

11.15 **08/03/19:** CSC recorded verbal and physical argument and that both had injuries.

11.16 **08/03/19:** School recorded events as related by both parties. Bruise noted to Aaliyah's face, and scratches to Sauron. Both relay the argument started through Aaliyah asking for money for food. She stated she hadn't eaten over the weekend due to no food in the house.

11.17 **11/03/19:** CSC recorded strategy discussion. There were concerns that Aaliyah used alcohol and cannabis to manage her low mood and had stated that she no longer wished to live. She had also started using cocaine. Both Aaliyah and Sauron listed as suspects. It was noted that Sauron had a close relationship

[7] This has not been able to be substantiated.

with Aaliyah's family and would request help from them as part of a safety agreement if Aaliyah was intoxicated. Their child expressed to social workers that Sauron scared him and would request to go to Grandparents when mum was not there.

11.18 **12/03/19:** GP visit and following Aaliyah's disclosure of strangulation and bruise noted, GP referred to Coventry Haven, Women's aid.

11.19 **12/03/2019:** Coventry Haven Women's Aid received a referral from GP to IRIS[8], stating that Aaliyah had been physically assaulted and strangled on 08/03/2019 and feeling suicidal. DASH completed.

11.20 **14/03/19:** Strategy meeting. Aaliyah admitted alcohol and cannabis addiction due to depression. Sauron claimed Aaliyah had been abusive towards him physically and emotionally which included threatening to send him back to Pakistan and have him killed there. These allegations were denied by Aaliyah, who stated he was physically abusive towards her, and he only spent time with her when he wanted to have sex with her. The maternal family had been a supportive network to them all. They had raised concerns about Aaliyah's drinking, drug taking and mental health, but they appear to be controlling and undermining of Aaliyah's attempts to parent her child. **1st April**, Aaliyah's child placed on child protection plan.

11.21 **28/04/19:** Aaliyah called the police and reported Sauron had hit her, smacking her head against a wardrobe after she refused to have sex and stated he would cause trouble for her with CSC. Counter allegation made and Sauron seen with scratches to face. Aaliyah was intoxicated and had no visible injuries. Both were arrested. In interview, Aaliyah outlined difficulties for her in the marriage. Sauron chose to make no comment. Case filed no further action.

11.22 **30/04/19:** At Coventry Haven Aaliyah met IRIS practitioner and outlined issues within her marriage.

11.23 **08/05/19:** CSC recorded a domestic abuse incident reported by the family who state Aaliyah was under the influence of alcohol.

11.24 **22/05/19:** Coventry Haven met with Aaliyah who expressed a wish to move to a different property but needed financial help to do so. Aaliyah advised that she

[8] IRIS: Identification & Referral to Improve Safety), is a specialist domestic abuse education, support and referral programme providing training for GP teams and a named advocate to whom patients can be referred to for support. IRIS offers a targeted intervention for patients experiencing current or former domestic violence or abuse from a partner, ex-partner or family member. IRIS supports patients by providing: clear care pathways: emotional support: information on housing or legal remedies; signposting: risk assessments and safety planning.

then moved on the **19th of June 2019.** Aaliyah remained at this address until her death.

11.25 **23/07/19:** Change, Grow, Live closed Aaliyah's case as a serial non-attender.

11.26 **29/08/19:** CSC referred Aaliyah to Coventry Haven.

11.27 **12/09/19:** CSC recorded Aaliyah self-medicating with alcohol and suicidal 28. Mental health assessment sought.

11.28 **12/09/19:** School recorded Sauron stating Aaliyah had kicked him out when he wouldn't give her enough money. States its Aaliyahs flat and she shouts at him and kicks the doors. Advised to report to police if it recurs.

11.29 **13/09/19:** Aaliyah attended A and E reporting feeling suicidal. Referral to GP.

11.30 **13/09/19:** GP referred to Crisis Resolution Home Treatment Team (CRHTT), due to Aaliyah stating she did not want to live. CRHTT unable to establish contact.

11.31 **16/09/19:** CSC visited Aaliyah who agreed to her child staying with Aunt whilst she focused on her needs.

11.32 **16/09/19:** Change, Grow, Live confirm positive drugs test for cocaine. Aaliyah erratic and unsettled. Stated Sauron had left and taking substances because her child is with their Aunt. Disclosed an incident of domestic abuse by Sauron.

11.33 **17/09/19:** CRHTT[9] assessed Aaliyah by phone. Stated depressed and separated from husband.

11.34 **22/09/19:** CRHTT completed an assessment and concluded no on-going role for them. Aaliyah separated from Sauron. Reported having some suicidal thoughts however 'these appear reactional to stressors and past trauma' including domestic abuse.

11.35 **06/10/19:** Aaliyah called 999 to report to police that Sauron 'had kicked the f out of her'. Aaliyah informed officers that she had a physical altercation with Sauron, who banged her head, after discovering that he had been using the services of escorts around the country. She stated that there was previously undisclosed DA, which he had also perpetrated. DARA[10] risk assessment: medium risk. Sauron arrested and denied assault countering he had been assaulted and had scratches. Aaliyah no injuries, insufficient evidence and case closed. Agreed to

[9] CRHTT: Community Mental Health Services. Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team
[10] DARA: Domestic Abuse Risk assessment introduced by the College of Policing for police use only, designed to better identify coercive and controlling behaviour: Police Professional | Officers better equipped to spot controlling behaviour

a referral to the National Centre for Domestic Violence (NCDV[11]) but it cannot be established if this happened.

11.36 **06/10/19:** CSC recorded a domestic abuse incident. Following Aaliyah finding searches for escorts, this turned into a physical altercation.

11.37: **15/10/19:** Change, Grow, Live saw Aaliyah who reported alcohol dependency.

11.38 **05/11/19:** CSC made the decision to commence pre-proceedings due to Aaliyah's child suffering emotional abuse. Aaliyah had not been undergoing drugs testing.

11.39 **04/12/19:** CSC referred both Aaliyah and Sauron to perpetrator of domestic abuse services.

11.40 **23/01/20:** Aaliyah saw her GP and reported low mood.

11.41 **31/01/20:** Change, Grow, Live saw Aaliyah and prescribed alcohol relapse medication which Aaliyah did not collect.

11.42 **31/01/20:** Psychological Assessment of Aaliyah was completed. The report highlighted numerous concerns about Aaliyah's readiness to change and her reliance on substances to cope with situations, her patterns of chronic domestic abuse, her mental health difficulties and narcissistic tendencies.

11.43 **26/02/20:** Sauron attended perpetrator work and denied offending stating it was all Aaliyah.

11.44 **13/03/20:** Aaliyah self-referred to Talking Therapies but did not respond to contact.

11.45 **31/03/20:** Aaliyah prescribed anti-craving medication from Change, Grow, Live, but did not collect.

11.46 **07/04/20:** CSC commenced care proceedings. Aaliyahs child with maternal Aunt whilst she had tonsilitis, since 02/04/20.

11.47 **15/04/2020:** Children's Social Care recorded that Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC), recommended that Aaliyah receives 20 sessions of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, (CBT), prior to starting treatment for alcohol use. Due to non-engagement, case closed on the **1st May 2020.**

11.48 **21/05/20**: The police recorded that Aaliyah, whilst drunk, got into an altercation with a female. Referred to CSC and assessed at child protection review.

[11] NCVD: https://www.ncdv.org.uk/ provides a fast, free, emergency injunction service for domestic abuse.

11.49 **27/05/20:** Aaliyah self-referred to Talking Therapies. She missed an appointment and rebooked for later in June. Telephone assessment on the **17th of June 2020** during which Aaliyah expressed a wish to stop drinking and receive counselling. Talking Therapies not suitable so referred to Valley House[12], but no appointments available due to covid restrictions.

11.50 **27/07/20 to 11/08/20:** Change, Grow, Live resumed work with Aaliyah for problematic alcohol use. Aaliyah assessed as a medium dependency. Admitted smoking cannabis daily and agreed to counselling, which commenced with Talking Therapies. Aaliyah reports her child living with Aunt.

11.51 **01/10/20:** Interim Care Order granted to maternal Aunt. Aaliyah tells school she is very sad about this.

11.52 **05/10/20:** Aaliyah reported drinking a bottle of wine a day to Change, Grow, Live.

11.53 **20/10/20:** The police record Aaliyah committed an offence of burglary to steal and use bank cards. Reported to CSC.

11.54 **21/10/20:** Talking Therapies assess that Aaliyah not committed to therapy currently and even though she wanted to engage, she will be closed to them until she is able to commit. GP informed.

11.55 **October 2020:** Family Drugs and Alcohol Court (FDAC), service engaged with Aaliyah in support of addressing substance issues to be able to parent her child. Aaliyah disclosed cocaine use and that alcohol and cannabis increased at situation with her child. Agreed to full assessment.

11.56 **02/11/20:** Aaliyah suffered a mental health crisis and reported to Ambulance Service, feeling suicidal but refused treatment from ambulance team.

11.57 **December 2020 to 17th February 2021:** Change, Grow, Live worked with Aaliyah who was able to commence anti-craving medication. By February 27th Aaliyah reported not having drunk for a month and no drugs use.

11.58 **26th of February, 25th of March and 22nd of April 2021:** Aaliyah told her GP that in February, she had a panic attack due to stress re family. In March, that she cannot sleep but on the whole mood has improved, and in April, feels medication not working and feeling low.

11.59 **15/05/21:** Special Guardianship Order made for Aaliyah's child to remain with Aunt. Reduced access rights for Aaliyah. Change, Grow Live report Aaliyah stating alcohol free for six months and having reached goals, case closed.

[12] Valley House supports domestic abuse victims to live somewhere safe and at the time were commissioned to provide counselling services. This service is now provided by 'space to thrive'.

11.60 **19/05/21:** Aaliyah self-referred to Talking Therapies.

11.61 **22/05/21:** Aaliyah had a mental health crisis and asked to be sectioned. States did not wish to live and had consumed vodka. Attended A and E but did not stay for treatment.

11.62 **28/05/21:** Aaliyah told her GP that very low but not suicidal.

11.63 **01/08/21:** Aaliyah attended court and pleaded guilty to burglary. Sentence due in November.

11.64 **26th and 27th August 2021:** Aaliyah informed her GP that feeling anxious and about to travel to Pakistan.

11.65 **15/10/21:** Aaliyah's brother informed agencies that Aaliyah had died in Pakistan.

12 Overview of Known Information

12.1 Throughout the scoping period, Aaliyah reported being the victim of physical and emotional domestic abuse to the police, Children's Social care, her GP, Change, Grow, Live, Talking Therapies, FDAC, and her child's school. Aaliyah described her circumstances of abuse to include controlling behaviour.

12.2 Agencies were aware that Aaliyah was British born and had agreed to a marriage to Sauron, her first cousin, a Pakistani man from a remote area who spoke no English. Aaliyah described her difficult marital and family situation and the pressures this caused her, indicating a potential risk from honour-based abuse that was not recognised.

12.3 Aaliyah reported substance use and a dependency on alcohol. Due to intoxication and counter-allegations by Sauron, Aaliyah was assessed to be a perpetrator of abuse or equally to blame for the abusive relationship. Aaliyah was known to take steps to separate from Sauron.

12.4 Aaliyahs and Sauron's poor relationship impacted on their child, resulting in a placement with his maternal Aunt. Aaliyah responded to treatment for alcohol dependency, abstaining for six months, but did not stop substance use, and the child proceedings court made the decision to place her child permanently away from her on a Special Guardianship Order, with reduced access, three months prior to travelling.

12.5 Immediately following the Special Guardianship Order, Aaliyah had a reported mental health crisis and reported having resumed drinking.

12.6 Aaliyahs GP were aware that Aaliyah was travelling to Pakistan.

13 Conclusions

13.1 Aaliyah was a British Asian woman, who was born, raised and educated in Coventry. She was an out-going, independent woman who enjoyed a westernised outlook on life. Sadly, when visiting family in a remote village in Pakistan, Aaliyah died suddenly on the day she was planning her return to Coventry. She was 35 years of age. Her cause of death has not been able to be established, however, this DARDR has considered agency interactions with Aaliyah prior to travel to Pakistan due to a history of reported domestic abuse and concerns that she may have been at risk of honour-based abuse.

13.2 Aaliyah was born in Coventry. Her parents had immigrated to Coventry from a small rural village in Kasmir, Pakistan prior to her birth. Her mother retained her cultural traditions and did not speak English at home, remaining close to her sister and wider family back in Pakistan. When 14 years old, tragedy struck Aaliyah when she was with her beloved father when he died suddenly on the street. This resulted in Aaliyah suffering trauma and depression for which Aaliyah used alcohol, cannabis and later, cocaine, to help her cope.

13.3 Aaliyah taking substances caused pressure within her family and Aaliyah's mother was under cultural pressure from her wider family to reduce perceived family shame. At 25 years of age, her mother took Aaliyah to her village in Pakistan where Aaliyah married her first cousin, (mothers sisters' son). Aaliyah agreed to this, but it resulted in an unhappy marriage due to cultural incompatibility. Her husband, Sauron, had an ambition to come to the UK but was uneducated and entrenched in cultural patriarchal values which were the opposite of Aaliyah's westernised freedoms. As such, they came from vastly different cultural backgrounds whilst sharing the same wider family whose marital beliefs were traditionally patriarchal; thereby placing pressure on Aaliyah to conform to family wishes versus her own values and needs.

13.4 Aaliyah and Sauron had a child quickly, and although staying in contact, did not live together until Sauron came to the UK in the spring of 2018 when their child was five years old and a spousal visa gained. Sauron did not speak English and initially they lived together with Aaliyah's mother.

13.5 Aaliyah and Sauron's cultural differences soon caused arguments mainly because Sauron did not approve of Aaliyah's drinking, socialising and taking substances. The first report of domestic abuse by Aaliyah to the police was in July 2018, followed by a further 4 reports between then and October 2019. However, none of the reports concluded that Aaliyah was a victim of domestic abuse, instead Sauron was believed when he made counter-allegations against her. An opportunity to identify high risk of harm to Aaliyah and a referral to

MARAC was missed when the police failed to include evidence of strangulation within a risk assessment. Aaliyah was perceived as equally to blame for abuse and on one occasion, arrested after she called for help when Sauron again made a counter-allegation.

13.6 The police did not show professional curiosity towards Aaliyah and did not believe her. They did not listen when she outlined clear circumstances of coercive and controlling behaviour. They did not consider her situation through a cultural lens despite her outlining the difficulties for her in a relationship so culturally different to Sauron's, in mitigation, when under arrest.

13.7 Unfortunately, Aaliyah was not supported by Children's Social Care who showed active bias against her and openly disrespected Aaliyah to partner agencies. Children's Social Care showed no empathy for Aaliyah or made any attempt to understand her context. Whilst their focus was properly on the impact of domestic abuse in the family on Aaliyah and Sauron's child, there was little support for Aaliyah to be a better parent. Reports made by Aaliyah to the police resulted in further restrictions on her ability to parent her child due to being blamed on every occasion as being equally to blame when in fact, Aaliyah had reported being assaulted when she refused to have sex with Sauron and assaulted again when she complained to Sauron having found intimate images of herself on his phone together with contact with escort agencies. Aaliyah was not listened to and her reality not included in social care assessments or criminal justice outcomes. Safeguarding practice must include an understanding of Counter-Allegations to better identify and protect victims of domestic abuse.

13.8 Aaliyahs family reported her substance use to Children's Social Care and Sauron was listened to, shown empathy and supported. Aaliyah was isolated and losing control of her child which directly impacted on her mental health and increased her substance use. This is turn impacted on her ability to parent and ensured Children's Social care commenced legal proceedings to place her child with her sister. There is no doubt that the attitude of Children's Social Care and the police impacted on Aaliyah's resilience resulting in mental health crises at key points of losing custody of her child. Sadly, by the time she was able to work effectively with support services, which she did through positive relationships with Change, Grow, Live and the Family Drug and Alcohol Court, and demonstrated abstinence from alcohol for six months, (although not cocaine), it was too late, and she lost custody permanently and with reduced contact. Aaliyah's needs had been completely lost in the child protection process.

13.9 The review has ascertained that Aaliyah was not viewed through a lens of understanding her cultural situation. Professional curiosity was not apparent,

and agencies did not understand her lived experience. There is no evidence that the impact of Sauron moving into the family home was assessed.

13.10 In consequence, agencies did not consider that Aaliyah may be at risk of honour-based abuse when in fact, she was at risk of harm by the many ways in which she could be perceived to have brought cultural shame on her family. Aaliyah did not openly disclose such a risk but there needs to be development in safeguarding practices to ensure that victims in Aaliyah's situation, especially where there is a clear cultural difference and poor relationship in consequence, are identified through professional curiosity, and an understanding that women (and some men), are at risk from honour-based harms. Victims of honour-based abuse will not disclose easily having been schooled in keeping issues within the family to protect the family honour. Professionals must acknowledge its existence, identify and risk assess routinely and signpost to support. Public awareness needs to be raised, especially in Coventry which has a higher-than-average British Asian community. The Government need to consider widening the legal definition from violence to a wider definition of abuse to better protect victims through the criminal justice system and to help increase reporting rates and referrals for specialist support.

13.11 Whilst it cannot be concluded that Aaliyah was unlawfully killed in Pakistan, she certainly died in circumstances that would warrant a full investigation in the UK. Aaliyahs family do not know how she died, and they need to understand as best they can to help them grieve. There are no guidelines in existence currently that provide a standard for police forces when deciding whether to consider investigating a suspicious death abroad. This needs to change to support families who have lost a loved one abroad in suspicious circumstances.

13.12 Public awareness also needs to be raised to acknowledge the fact that women are at risk of honour-based violence and death in rural Pakistan. The Foreign Office acknowledge the risk, and it is essential that safeguarding professionals understand the risk to women within patriarchal cultures who indicate they may travel to Pakistan. Advice, guidance and support must be made more widely available and safeguards considered prior to travel. Whilst it is not possible to understand if many British women have been killed through honour-based killing currently, due to a lack of data, the existence of the risk should be sufficient to promote greater awareness. One death is too many.

13.13 Aaliyah's lived experience was one of living between two very different cultures resulting in resistance and unhappiness on the one hand, and compliance and trying to keep her family happy, on the other. Ultimately, Aaliyah chose family and travelled to Pakistan at a time when she was very low and presented as being a long way from a perceived culturally ideal wife and Mother. Whilst it is

not possible to conclude that agencies could have identified any potential risk for honour-based violence and death in Pakistan for Aaliyah, valuable lessons can be learnt from what we know about her life and circumstances that highlight the very real risks of harm from domestic abuse or honour-based abuse, faced by victims living in a patriarchal culture who are not identified or heard and who may resist and not fit the norms expected; and understand how restricted their voice may be. It is essential that safeguarding practices acknowledge the risks from honour-based abuse openly and develop practice to understand each unique circumstance to better hear victims and identify and protect potentially hidden victims such as Aaliyah.

14 Lessons Learned from Analysis:

Aaliyah's Lived Experience

14.1 Lesson 1

Professionals did not demonstrate being 'curious' by asking questions and thereafter seeking or verifying information from alternative sources, as required, to gain an effective understanding of Aaliyahs circumstances and which would have enhanced knowledge of Aaliyah's s lived experience and risk of harm from abuse.

14.2 Lesson 2

The relationship between Children's Social Care and Aaliyah failed her. Conscious bias prevented them looking widely at Aaliyah's unique situation to understand her lived experience and cultural perspective and instead focused on the impact of her substance use without helping her to address the root causes that may assist her to be a better parent, which in turn, may reduce her need for substances. A more successful relationship with FDAC and Change, Grow, Live resulted in Aaliyah reaching her goals to stop drinking and an end to police callouts. Sadly, this was too late for Aaliyah, and she did not get to be with her child.

Agencies Effectiveness at Identifying Aaliyah as a Victim of Domestic Abuse:

14.3 Lesson 3

West Midlands Police did not effectively identify and manage Aaliyah as a victim of on-going domestic abuse. They did not identify disclosures of coercive and controlling behaviour, strangulation or Sauron's possession of indecent images of Aaliyah as basic elements of an abusive relationship. They did not record the

first disclosure of abuse which impacted on on-going risk assessments. They did not identify a high risk of harm from strangulation which also impacted on further risk assessments. They did not consider support to Aaliyah by consideration of a DVPN.

14.4 Lesson 4:

Opportunities to refer Aaliyah to a MARAC were missed by the police through inaccurate risk assessments that did not fully take cognisance of the features of domestic abuse faced by Aaliyah nor consider risk recorded in previous incidents.

14.5 Lesson 5

Children's Social Care did not challenge the narrative that Aaliyah was equally to blame for abuse in her marriage to Sauron leading to bias against her and missed an early opportunity to identify her as a victim of domestic abuse.

14.6 Lesson 6

Safeguarding training to front line practitioners must include an understanding of counter allegations within their context and why victims may resort to retaliatory violence, to ensure all victims of domestic abuse are appropriately identified and offered services that can reduce their risk from on-going harm.

Agencies Effectiveness at Managing Aaliyah's Vulnerabilities:

14.7 Lesson 7

There were barriers to engagement for Aaliyah through a lack of being believed, a lack of understanding of her needs through poor professional curiosity and a focus on core tasks other than Aaliyah's needs. Covid restrictions also impacted on services for Aaliyah.

14.8 Lesson 8

A poor relationship and a lack of understanding of Aaliyah's lived experience by Children's Social Care impacted directly on Aaliyah and added to her poor mental health preventing timely interventions with specialist substance agencies. Change, Grow, Live and FDAC did support and work effectively with Aaliyah to which she responded and demonstrated abstinence from alcohol and a cessation of police reports. However, it was too late for Aaliyah to demonstrate competency to parent, and she was not able to prevent a court order to place her child away from her resulting in a relapse to substance use and a further mental health crisis.

Agencies Effectiveness at Identifying Aaliyah's risk from Honour Based Abuse:

14.9 Lesson 9

Aaliyah was at risk of honour-based abuse due to the particular risk features of her situation. However, she was not seen through a cultural lens by key agencies who focused on the presenting situation as relevant to their key priorities without considering the existence of risk from honour-based abuse she faced. In consequence, Aaliyah's risk was not identified.

14.10 Lesson 10

The current legal definition of honour-based violence does not reflect the reality for those at risk from wider honour-based abuse and prevents honour-based incidents being recognised, reported, recorded and managed as a crime. It prevents victims identifying their situation and seeking support from specialist organisations.

Issues surrounding Aaliyah's death:

14.11 Lesson 11

Women in Pakistan are at risk of honour-based violence and killings today. Family honour is a key feature of cultural belief and women within a patriarchal system have reduced rights than in the UK. A lack of data prevents an understanding of how prevalent this issue may be for British women who travel to Pakistan. Public awareness needs to be raised to highlight the risks women such as Aaliyah may face when under pressure to travel away from the UK. Local safeguarding agencies need to understand the risks and encompass them within practice. Support services about where help and guidance may be found need to be known about in Coventry.

14.12 Lesson 12

Whilst it cannot be established that Aaliyah died subject to a domestic homicide, it is not right that families are left not knowing where to go for help to understand how a death abroad occurred, or to have to make many formal complaints to be heard. There needs to be the development of guidance for families and an agreed publicly available standard for when the British Police should consider investigation.

15 Recommendations

15.1 Recommendation 1

Agencies must evidence to Coventry Community Safety Partnership that that they are prompting and encouraging their professionals to be professionally curious, and Coventry Community Safety Partnership must gain an improved understanding of how to support agencies with this elementary practice.

15.2 Recommendation 2

The Coventry Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board should ensure their partner agencies review and revise domestic abuse training to ensure it encompasses an understanding of the elements of forms of domestic abuse and an understanding of victim context where there are counter allegations to ensure victims of domestic abuse are properly identified.

15.3 Recommendation 3

The Home Office should take cognisance of the issues raised in this report that identify the need for a wider legal definition for incidents that are honour-based to identify such incidents as a crime to enhance victim safety and wider public awareness necessary to enhance reporting.

15.4 Recommendation 4

The Coventry Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board should reassure themselves that their partner agencies safeguarding policy and procedures encompass an understanding of honour-based abuse and the implications for victims within wider safeguarding investigations to identify, support and reduce risk to victims of honour-based abuse. Also, to enhance identification of women at potential risk of honour-based violence who come into contact with services, ensure a routine risk assessment and advice is considered, supported by the development of guidance for victims that provide an understanding of where they may go for options and support, especially if they are known to be travelling out of the UK.

15.5 Recommendation 5

The Home Office should take cognisance of the findings of this review and consider a national campaign to raise awareness of the risks to women from Honour-based violence and abuse when travelling outside of the UK, and which promotes where advice and support may be found.

15.6 Recommendation 6

Coventry Community Safety Partnership should disseminate this Overview Report to the Coventry Safeguarding Adult's Board and Coventry Safeguarding

Children's Board for them to take cognisance of the learning and incorporate into policy and procedure where relevant.

Appendix 1 Single-agency Recommendations

1. University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust to remind staff of the need to be professionally curious and undertake routine enquiry in relation to domestic abuse.

2. Children's Social Care to review referral processes to ensure victims are not deemed to be perpetrators.

3. Children's Social Care to enhance reflective supervision through a culturally competent lens to consider honour-based abuse.

4. Children's Social Care to consider where dual diagnosis may be a feature and consider holistic support with partners.

5. Mental Health Services and Children's Social Care to enhance information sharing between them.

6. West Midlands Police to ensure DARA risk assessments include historical and relevant known information, including context where counter-allegations have been made to enhance effectiveness and identify risk to domestic abuse victims.

7. Change, Grow, Live to enhance professional curiosity to consider cultural risk and a potential for honour-based abuse, and to better support their client and family members.

8. Change, Grow, Live to review use of their MDT (multi-disciplinary team), to maximise opportunities to call a MDT meeting to enhance risk identification.

9. Change, Grow, Live to review and enhance information sharing with Primary Care.