Coventry Community Safety Partnership

Domestic Homicide Review into the death of Nevaeh

Executive Summary

Date of Death: January 2022

Report Chair and Author: Carolyn Carson

Statement by Nevaeh's Mother at the trial for her homicide

"Nevaeh was 32 at the time of her death and still had her whole life ahead of her.

Her story should be a warning to all who find themselves in such relationships and who remain in the hope that the situation will improve".

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1 Introduction

1.1 This report of a domestic homicide review examines agency responses and support given to Navaeh, a resident of Coventry, prior to the point of her death in January 2022. At the time of her death, Nevaeh had been in a relationship with Derek, who was subsequently found guilty of her murder. Nevaeh was 32 years old, and Derek was 35 at the time of the homicide.

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 homicide, 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.

1.2 Timescales

This review began on the 18th of October 2023 and concluded on the 22nd of December 2025. Due to a delay whilst a criminal trial was undertaken, and an unforeseen change of review Chair due to illness, this has extended beyond a six-month period. However, the Chair is confident that it has been progressed as efficiently as possible once able to, albeit with a further slight delay due to agencies availability for panel meetings. The review acknowledges the difficulties for local agencies who are, at the time of this report, contributing to 13 current DHR's. Resource Implications for local authorities managing DHR's are acknowledged by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner in their report 'Learning from Loss', published in July 2025.[1]

1.3 Confidentiality

The findings of each review are confidential. Information is available only to participating professionals and their line managers through the process. The Chair is confident that appropriate confidentiality has been apparent through the process.

2 Terms of Reference

2.1 How effective were agencies in identifying and responding to the needs of the victim, with particular regard to Nevaeh's vulnerabilities, domestic abuse, drugs, alcohol, mental health, homelessness and having had her children removed from her care?

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

2.2 How effective were agencies in responding to the threat that Nevaeh faced from the perpetrator?

2.3 How effective were agencies in identifying and responding to the needs of the perpetrator?

2.4 What barriers to engagement did agencies face, with either the victim or perpetrator, and how did they seek to overcome these barriers in relation to their own service and referrals/enabling engagement with other agencies? Consider whether the victim's prior experiences of services may have impacted upon their ability to engage with her?

2.5 How effective were agencies in working together to prevent harm and to meet the individuals' needs?

2.6 What good practice can be identified?

2.7 What lessons can be learnt to prevent harm in the future?

2.8 What recommendations are being made by each organisation and how will the changes be achieved?

2.9 What system-wide, multi-agency recommendations can be identified?

3 Methodology

3.1 The Coventry Police and Crime Board were notified of the need to consider a domestic homicide review on the 24th of January 2022. This was disseminated to statutory partners within Coventry to request information and agree a decision to proceed. Following a majority agreement, the decision to undertake a DHR was made by the Coventry Community Safety Partnership on the 1st of April 2022 and the Home Office informed.

3.2 The Chair and Author were identified, engaged and contracts signed before the initial trawl documents were requested. A scoping meeting, and first panel was held followed by an IMR Authors briefing and reports received. At this point, the Chair / Author had to retire due to illness. A second, current Chair / Author was engaged in November 2024. From there, a second panel meeting was held on the 13th of February 2025 and learning event held on the 16th of May 2025. The Learning Event included available panel members and specialists, and a full discussion of events was held. This resulted in the draft overview report, followed by further panel discussion and agreement of findings.

3.3 The panel also met to specifically agree an action plan. Consequently, on 29th January 2026 the CSP submitted the Overview Report, Summary Report, Action Plan and Data Collection Document to the Home Office.

3.4 The scoping period was agreed to be from October 2018, at a point believed to be the commencement of Nevaeh's relationship with Derek, until Nevaeh's death in January 2022.

3.5 The review has been undertaken by means of an open and enquiring approach, with an emphasis on discussing events in the round against a comprehensive timeline at the learning event. A review panel of available statutory partners and specialist domestic abuse agencies have effectively supported the process. In total, 6 panel meetings have been held, sufficient to ensure the panel were able to effectively discharge their statutory duties and support the review author to complete the overview report.

The Executive Summary will be published on the Coventry Council website together with any comments made by the Home Office at the conclusion of the process.

4 Involvement of Family, Friends and wider Community

4.1 Nevaeh's Mother has been supported by the specialist advocacy Victim Support Homicide Service, through both the Criminal Justice and DHR processes. Once the criminal trial was complete, a caseworker facilitated a meeting between the initial review chair and the family in November 2023. This meeting provided valuable information that supported the review. The current Chair met with Nevaeh's Mother, on-line, in advance of the Learning Event and has incorporated her views and perspectives through the Overview Report wherever possible. The Chair met personally with Nevaeh's mother twice more to discuss the Overview Report and to allow her the opportunity to input to the final report and the Action Plan.

4.2 The Review Chair and panel send their sincere condolences to Nevaeh's family and appreciate their involvement in the review at such a difficult time for them.

4.3 There has not been an opportunity to engage Nevaeh's wider family and friends in the review, nor any input from the wider community. Attempts to engage the perpetrator were not successful before he dies in January 2025. Wider family members did not wish to engage with the review, and the review was not able to engage wider members of the community who may have known Navaeh.

5 DHR Panel and Contributors to the Review[2]

5.1

NAME	AGENCY	STATUS	IMR or Summary Report

[2] 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.

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 Report Writer	IMR
	Citizen Housing		IMR
	NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board- Primary Care	Panel Member Report Author	IMR
	Probation Service	Panel Member Report Author	IMR
	Change, Grow, Live	Panel Member Report Author	Summary
	Coventry City Councils Children's Service	Panel Member	Summary
	Coventry City Council Homeless Service	Panel Member Report	Summary
	Coventry Haven	Panel Member Report	Summary
	University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust	Panel Member Report	Summary
	Kairos	Specialist support to panel	

6 Author and Chair of the DHR and Overview Report

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 Nevaeh, or directly with agencies local to Coventry City. Carolyn successfully completed the revised Chairs training provided by AAFDA in October 2024 and is registered with the Home Office as an accredited DHR Reviewer. The DHR was initially delayed awaiting the prosecution of Derek through the criminal justice system. On 6th October 2023, Derek was sentenced to life imprisonment, to serve a minimum of 21 years, having been found guilty of Nevaeh's murder after a six-week trial. The coroner has been informed about the DHR and will be updated once the review is completed to ensure they can fulfil any outstanding duties.

7 Parallel Reviews

The DHR was initially delayed awaiting the prosecution of Derek through the criminal justice system. On 6th October 2023, Derek was sentenced to life imprisonment, to serve a minimum of 21 years, having been found guilty of Nevaeh's murder after a six-week trial. The coroner has been informed about the DHR and will be updated once the review is completed to ensure they can fulfil any outstanding duties.

8 Equality and Diversity

8.1 The Review Panel has considered all protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, for Nevaeh and Derek and has identified that sex and gendered abuse, race and ethnicity, may have been relevant in this case. The panel has also identified that vulnerabilities to consider should include mental health and problematic drug and alcohol use.

8.2 Nevaeh self-identified as black and mixed heritage. Her Mother is Black Jamaican and her father, White Irish. Nevaeh lived in the area of Coventry.

8.3 The local authority in Coventry[3] formally describe their city as becoming increasingly diverse with 44.7% identifying as belonging to an ethnic minority[4]

[3] About Coventry – Coventry City Council

[4] . 'Ethnic minority' is used to refer to all ethnic groups except the white British group. Ethnic minority groups include White minorities, including White Irish, Gypsy, Roma, and Irish Traveller groups, and the 'White Other' group

group, an increase from 33.4% in 2011. This is higher than the region (27.9%) and England as a whole (26.5%).

8.4 In the ward where Nevaeh resided[5], 10% of the population identified as Black or Black British in the 2021 census and 3.4% as mixed heritage.

8.5 Derek was of Polish descent and came to the UK in 2005. He was joined by his mother who spoke no English. From records held by the Probation Service, Derek reported having had an abusive, alcoholic and violent father and who at the age of 16, he assaulted to stop him harming his mother; after which the abuse stopped. Derek had therefore witnessed abuse as a child.

8.6 Assessing Nevaeh through the lens of Intersectionality presents a very complex individual, shaped by past life experiences. She was mixed heritage, and from a family whereas a child, she describes having witnessed much criminality and violence, resulting in childhood trauma. To cope, she turned to illegal substances and alcohol at an early age. From the age of 16, Nevaeh had abusive relationships. At 17 years old she married a much older man with whom she had her three children. That marriage was very abusive and chaotic resulting in Nevaeh's children being placed into care, which in turn enhanced her substance use. After leaving her husband, she met another abusive partner who subjected her to strangulation, and then met Derek and entered another abusive relationship, very sadly her last at 32 years of age. Her reliance on substances and alcohol continued into this relationship together with the impact of childhood, and ongoing, trauma.

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 Domestic Homicide overview report will be available on the 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 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.

[5] Population and demographics – Coventry City Council

9.4 Nevaeh's mother has been given the opportunity to review the Overview Report and Action Plan, and comment appropriately. To assist her, she was provided with a hard copy and had had much support from the Victim Support Homicide Team to communicate with the review.

10 Background Information to the Homicide

10.1 Nevaeh lived in Coventry and was killed in the home she shared with Derek. They met in the autumn of 2018 when Nevaeh was 25 years old and Derek 28 years old.

10.2 The brief circumstances of the homicide are that Nevaeh had been reported missing on Wednesday 19th January 2022 by her mother, stating that she had not seen or heard from her since 16th January 2022. Police Officers forced entry to their home and found Nevaeh in the bed with the duvet pulled over her head. Upon removing the duvet Nevaeh was found to have severe head and facial injuries and was declared life extinct. Nevaeh died in the attack whilst she was very likely asleep in bed. She had no defence injuries but had suffered catastrophic injuries to her head, caused by being struck with a heavy object. Although discovered on the 19th January 2022, Nevaeh likely died on the 16th January 2022Nevaeh's There has been significant media interest in this case.

10.3 At the start of their relationship, Derek was subject to Post Sentence Supervision by the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC), having served a 6-month sentence for Assault Occasioning Bodily Harm (ABH), against a former girlfriend in January 2018. The circumstances were that Derek attacked her whilst she had been asleep in bed. This offence is noteworthy given the similarities between its circumstances and those surrounding Nevaeh's death.

10.4 There was a history of domestic abuse in Nevaeh and Dereks relationship. The police have a record of 9 separate reports, the first being on the 9th March 2019. This was just a few days before Nevaeh, whilst drunk, committed an offence of Arson with Intent to Endanger Life, for which she was sentenced to four years imprisonment on the 5th November 2019, having been remanded since the 2nd July 2019. Nevaeh was released on the 30th of June 2021 and remained on licence supervised by the Probation Service until her death.

10.5 Whilst in prison, Nevaeh resumed and maintained her relationship with Derek and moved in with him on her release. Abusive incidents continued until Nevaeh's death, the first post release report of domestic abuse was made on the 5th September 2021. Many of the reports were made by third parties and resulted in both Nevaeh and Derek being named as victims and/or perpetrators at conclusion.

10.6 Nevaeh did not make any statements in support of criminal investigations of abuse following reports and did not report where notable evidence of strangulation was identified at her post-mortem, an event which was assessed to have occurred approximately two weeks prior to her death.

10.7 Derek pleaded not guilty to Nevaeh's murder but was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment in November 2023. However, Derek later died in prison in January 2025.

11 Chronology of Events

11.1 **Prior to the scoping period:** both Nevaeh and Derek were known to agencies. Nevaeh has been known to agencies due to reports of domestic abuse having been reported between herself and her former husband. Also, due to the effect substance use and a chaotic, abusive marriage had on her life , Children's Social Care engaged with the family to protect her three children in 2016, resulting in them being placed under a Care Order to live with relatives. Derek was known for a conviction for wounding in 2013 and later, for reports of domestic abuse with a former partner, one of which resulted in a prison sentence, and for offences involving illegal substances.

11.2 Uniquely, the review has had an opportunity to be made aware of a set of diaries that Nevaeh left behind which Nevaeh wrote whilst in prison, and which chronicled her early life and the period of Social Care engagement and continued into her relationship with Derek. These writings have been summarised for the benefit of the review and incorporated through the report. They provide valuable insights as written by Nevaeh.

11.3 This text has been removed for publication.

11.4 A key event in Nevaeh's life, in September 2004, when she was around 15 years old, was the brutal murder of the same favourite Uncle in the street, having been stabbed through the eye. She describes this as a traumatic event and the loss of a trusted adult.

11.5 Pointedly, the significant life events discussed up to this point take place during the adolescent years (10 to 24 age range). This is provoking because brain maturation in the adolescent informs a period of the greatest developmental change in life, during which children become adults.

11.6 Research establishes that the adolescent age range is often a tumultuous time mostly due to transformations in the limbic system impacting upon self-control,

decision making, emotions and risk-taking behaviours[6]. But, in Nevaeh's case she is descriptive of extremely traumatic episodes, rapid change in family structure, bereavement and high-end exposure to extreme violence and abuse both inside the family home and away; all in the backdrop of child to adult brain change.

11.7 Nevaeh describes illicit drug use from the age of 13; she started to smoke weed with her friends, apparently enjoying the buzz, they would skip their classes to smoke a bong and hang out. This increased after the death of her uncle whereby she increased her use of weed, lost interest in school, was often truant and started 'silly relationships'.

11.8 Nevaeh describes leaving home at 16 but returned by her brother who punched her in the face and insisted she move in with him at his flat from where they both smoked weed. At 16, she entered an abusive relationship in which both would take weed and cocaine, and he would hit her, on one occasion chipping a tooth. She stayed because she thought she loved him. However, on buying drugs from a new dealer for them, she fell for the new dealer who would become her husband. At this time, Nevaeh would have been around 17, and he was 22 years older than her.

11.9 Police records show the first recorded domestic abuse incident between Nevaeh and her husband being created in May 2011, where threats were made against her life and that of her family. A number of incidents were reported to the police during the relationship, much of which were intimate partner abuse and violence and conflict over family and children. And, towards the end of the relationship there emerged serious concerns regarding her husband and his relationships with much younger female children, including his own biological daughter and others[7].

11.10 Nevaeh described the relationship as increasingly controlling and he destroyed all relationships that were close to her. They had three children together. When the youngest was around 3 years old, children's social care became involved with the family. Nevaeh disclosed the nature of the abusive relationship, and she did flee to a mother and baby unit. However, that didn't work out, leaving her homeless and when the social worker asked her to take her children to her mothers, she could not transport herself and arranged for her husband to collect her.

[6] see Arain et al., 2013 for a comprehensive account of brain regional morphology and function during adolescence). https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.2147/NDT.S39776

[7] Currently, he is subject to a Sexual Risk Order.

11.11 At this point her husband insisted they all go to Ireland to avoid social services. Once there, Nevaeh resisted this and they returned to the UK via Scotland where they were stopped by the police in October 2016, and the children placed away from Nevaeh, Nevaeh's mother having reported them all as missing. Children's Social Care had much involvement with Nevaeh at this time and completed assessments to understand her risks as a parent and worked with her to understand domestic abuse.

11.12 In consequence, Nevaeh goes on to write how losing the children was heart-breaking; she started to drink Vodka and on the day the children were legally placed with their aunt, she smoked crack cocaine for the first time. Nevaeh recalled how crack cocaine numbed the pain she was feeling so she smoked it all day and all night. She stopped eating and took to hiding away in crack dens with people she did not know and when she did go out, it was at night. She accepted that she used alcohol as a come down and then she would use weed (cannabis). Thus, Nevaeh was seemingly using a concoction of substances all with differing brain and mood effects by 26 years old.

11.13 A further abusive relationship followed during which Nevaeh describes having been strangled. She left but returned and a further strangulation occurred a few days later resulting in Nevaeh leaving immediately and not returning even to collect belongings.

11.14 In September 2017, Children's Social Care conducted a psychological assessment which identified that the children would be at significant risk if returned to Nevaeh's care, citing concerns around her drug and alcohol use, low self-worth and co-dependent relationship with her husband. The recommendation was that Nevaeh "*needed to be abstinent from alcohol and other mood-altering substances for at least nine to twelve months".* The parenting assessment further concluded that Nevaeh's parenting capacity meant she would struggle to meet the needs of her children.

11.15 Nevaeh's children were subject of a Care Order at the conclusion of the care proceedings. At the final hearing the arrangements agreed in court were the following: "*contact between [the children] and [their] mother reduce gradually to take place during school holidays (six times per year) and will need to be coordinated around significant events (... birthday, Christmas and Easter). Contact will remain supervised by (local) Family Centre and will take place over three hours. Contact arrangements will then be reviewed within the Looked After process in order to reflect any changes in circumstances or to reflect the child's wishes."*

11.16 Later in the autumn of 2018, Nevaeh describes how, needing money for drugs, she would pose as a prostitute, demand money up front then steals the money and run off. In this way she met Derek. They hit it off, so she chose not to steal. Instead, they smoked weed together before inviting him back to her flat that evening and from then on 'couldn't get enough of him'.

11.17 Nevaeh describes Derek as having been loyal to her even when she was made homeless. She quantifies her love by explaining how Derek:

'bottled one of my so-called friends one night because he thought I was smoking with him. That was when I seen the pure love this man had for me and how much I had been hurting him to know I had such a bad habit'.

11.18 Nevaeh writes that Derek did not like her taking cocaine but that her need for the drug was more important to her at that time.

11.19 Derek was born in Poland, and records show he did not have any convictions prior to leaving. Whilst in the UK between arriving in 2005 and prior to the scoping period, Derek has been convicted of grievous bodily harm in 2013 for which he went to prison for 18 months. In 2017, he was convicted of using threatening and abusive words or behaviour likely to cause Harassment or Alarm. In October 2018 he was convicted for failing to provide a specimen for analysis. There are also reports in 2018 of Derek being caught in possession of controlled substances. In June 2018, police attended a report of domestic abuse by Derek towards his mother, during which Derek was observed to be abusive to officers.

11.20 Of note is that in February 2018, Derek was convicted of a domestic abuse crime, an assault occasioning actual bodily harm for which he was sentenced to six months imprisonment, having punched his victim to her nose and face whilst she was in bed trying to sleep. The victim stated that Derek had become more abusive through the relationship especially when drunk. Her risk assessment showed that Derek had previously attempted to strangle her, had been violent to relatives and had mental health and alcohol issues. Prior to this incident, there had been three reports of domestic abuse in this relationship during 2017. On subsequent release from prison, Derek was assessed as being at medium risk of causing harm to the public, particularly within a relationship.

11.21 **Scoping Period:** There are numerous agency interactions with Derek and Nevaeh in the scoping period. The following will highlight the key interactions.

11.22 **25th October 2018:** Derek convicted of driving over the limit and being in possession of controlled substances, an offence committed in September 2018.

11.23 Citizen Housing engaged with Nevaeh in **December 2018 through to mid-March 2019**, due to Nevaeh having fallen out with neighbours and she reported not feeling safe and needed to be rehoused as she was now homeless. Citizen Housing had received reports from neighbours of Nevaeh often arguing with a polish man. They reported having seen the same man walking around with a machete. The police have no record of this. Coventry City Council engaged with Nevaeh concerning homelessness and sought advice from the police to ascertain if a threshold for re-housing had been reached.

11.24 Nevaeh reached out to Children's Social Care in **January 2019** to seek advice to revoke the care order in order to have her children returned to her. Nevaeh was advised to seek legal advice. However, she did not attend a Looked After Review.

11.25 **6th March 2019:** Nevaeh made two calls to Police reporting that Derek would not leave the address, and he'd threatened her with a knife. Police attended and both parties were present. Nevaeh was sober but Derek was described as being intoxicated and emotional. No knife was located. Derek was arrested and denied the offence. Due to insufficient evidence and no complaint from Nevaeh, the matter was filed. Nevaeh completed a DARA[8] risk assessment: medium risk identified.

11.26 **9th March 2019:** Nevaeh was charged with Arson with Intent to Endanger Life. Whilst drunk, Nevaeh was seen to break a window and set a fire, which caused an explosion in a communal block of flats. During the incident she sustained an injury to her nose for which she was seen at the Coventry and Warwickshire University Hospital, A and E, prior to going to custody. Nevaeh pleaded guilty to the crime and was released on bail conditions to reside with her mother away from Coventry.

11.27 **27th April 2019:** The Ambulance Service and police received 2 calls concerning a report that a woman had been strangled to death. Police established it to be a domestic incident between Derek and his mother. His mother denied the strangulation had occurred but did intimate she was scared of Derek and asked him to leave. It was filed as a domestic incident, non-crime incident. A DASH [9]was completed and a standard risk identified.

11.28 **9th May 2019:** Derek was seen by the Community Rehabilitation Community (CRC), as part of a Community Order he had been sentenced to on the 25th

[8] DARA: https://library.college.police.uk/docs/college-of-policing/Domestic-Abuse-Risk-Assessment-Rationale-2022.pdf Police use DARA whilst all other agencies use DASH.
[9] DASH: https://safelives.org.uk/resources-for-professionals/dash-resources/

October 2018 for a conviction of having been in charge of a vehicle and failing to provide a specimen. At this meeting, Derek disclosed having a new relationship.

11.29 **13th May 2019:** Nevaeh sought to attend her children's parents evening but advised she could not, nor write to her children to indicate they will be returning home.

11.30 **9th and 10th June 2019:** The police received a report on the 9th that Derek was kicking his mother. DASH refused. On the 10th, Dereks mother reported Derek refusing to leave her flat after an argument but stated they had resolved their differences. Filed as a non-crime domestic incident. The police referred this to the CRC as a housing issue for Derek.

11.31 **27th June 2019:** Nevaeh self-referred to Change, Grow, Live (CGL). Triage identified Nevaeh was smoking approximately £100 a week's worth of crack cocaine and occasional alcohol use.

11.32 **30th June 2019:** Nevaeh was staying at a homeless hotel when it is reported she became aggressive and assaulted another resident, having been drinking. No further action was taken but Nevaeh was remanded into custody until her sentencing for the Arson (due November) due to breaching her bail conditions by not living with her mother. The Probation Service commenced engagement with Nevaeh for pre-sentence reports.

11.33 **11th August 2019:** Dereks mother called the police to report a domestic incident by Derek; he having pulled her hair and ran off. DARA not completed but medium risk assessed.

11.34 **23rd September 2019:** Police recorded a domestic related theft following Derek reporting that over a period of time, Nevaeh had stolen money from him to fund a drug habit. Stated no longer in the relationship.

11.35 **November 4th 2019:** Nevaeh convicted for the Arson and sentenced to 4 years imprisonment – 2 in prison and 2 on licence. This was her only conviction.

11.36 **Whilst in prison,** Nevaeh took steps to address her addictions with a focus on seeing her children. Children's Social Care had much contact with her, and she progressed from a phone call through to a video call with her children at point of release. A safety plan and direct work was agreed to occur prior to actual contact once in the community.

11.37 Navaehs relationship resumed with Derek whilst in prison although on one occasion she stated that he had cheated on her and she wished to end it, but that Derek said he would kill himself if she did. Later, she informed Probation that she intended living with him on release, and she informed her GP that she wanted to start a family with him.

11.38 Nevaeh was diagnosed with depression whilst in prison and she made two attempts to hang herself. Prior to release, prison staff recorded that Nevaeh was a 'decent, hardworking resident'.

11.39 **21st January 2021:** Derek was found in possession of a large quantity of controlled substances and a CS cannister, matters that remained outstanding by the time of the homicide.

11.40 **27th January 2021:** Dereks landlord reported Derek had assaulted him when he arrived to fix a sink. Derek was arrested and a search of his room revealed a knuckle duster and a machete (described by him as being for decorative purposes).

11.41 **30th June 2021:** Nevaeh was released from prison. She was subject to licence conditions, notably to reside where directed, not to commit any offences and to engage with Change, Grow, Live as directed by Probation. Nevaeh was categorised as a MAPPA offender, Category 2, Level 1[10] and assessed as being a medium risk of harm to the public.

11.42 **Between release and end of August 2021:** Probation aware that Nevaeh was living with Derek. Nevaeh reported that he drank but she was trying to stop him to help her with remaining sober. Nevaeh was seen by Probation at home with Derek and reported to be well and happy.

11.43 **5th September 2021:** Police receive a third-party report from a neighbour that Nevaeh and Derek were arguing. Officers attended and spoke with Derek who stated he'd had a verbal argument with Nevaeh, but she had left. A neighbour confirmed Nevaeh had left the property saying she was leaving as the argument was getting too much. Both parties were deemed to be 'safe and well'. Advice was given, and the case closed a DA non-crime incident. DARA not completed. No referrals or signposting.

11.44 **13th to 16th September 2021:** Nevaeh self-referred to Change, Grow, Live and joined an on-line 'Positive Change' group.

11.45 **20th September 2021:** Police received a third-party report of screaming and shouting from Nevaeh's home address. Officers attended and spoke with Derek who said that he and his ex-partner, likely Nevaeh, had a heated discussion before she left. No offences were disclosed. DARA was offered but Derek refused to complete it. A risk assessment was recorded as "*There have only ever been alcohol-fuelled verbal altercations between the two and the offender,*

[10] MAPPA: Multi-agency public protection arrangements. Cat 2 is for the management of violent offenders at level 1, which means they are assessed as being able to be overseen by Probation only without the need for formal multi-agency risk meetings.

according to the IP, keeps bringing up past arguments. No threats of assaults or fights". Nevaeh was recorded as a suspect, and Derek as the victim.

11.46 **20th to 22nd September 2021:** Nevaeh was not contactable by Change, Grow, Live but on the 22nd, she saw her GP to report struggling with mental health and sought to continue counselling started in prison, for PTSD. Nevaeh did not respond to approaches from the mental health team.

11.47 **16th October 2021:** Police received a call from Nevaeh reporting a domestic incident. Nevaeh was spoken to alone but would not speak to officers through fear of being overheard. She was taken outside and still would not speak in detail. She said she did not want Derek to know she had called the police. Nevaeh had facial injuries and her fingernails were ripped. She refused to make a formal complaint and was described as appearing 'terrified'. At the scene, Nevaeh told the police that Derek had a large stash of illegal substances hidden in the freezer for which he was arrested but released the following morning. DASH risk assessment of medium risk.

11.48 **21st October 2021:** Early Intervention Worker within Safe Haven attempted to contact Nevaeh following a medium risk of harm identified.

11.49 **25th October 2021:** Change, Grow, Live contacted Nevaeh and appointment arranged.

11.50 **25th October 2021:** Children's Social Care shared a safety plan with Nevaeh outlining how contact with her children was to be conducted.

11.51 **5th November 2021:** Probation saw Nevaeh where she reported having resumed contact with her children, supervised, which was frustrating, and wanting to prove to Children's Social Care that she was not on drugs, and sought a drugs test.

11.52 **10th November 2021:** Change, Grow, Live close their file on Nevaeh, not having been able to make contact.

11.53 **17th November 2021:** Nevaeh reported to the police that she and Derek had been separated for six weeks and that he had sent photos of himself with a noose around his neck and was locked in his house. Derek later found by police safe and well at his mother's.

11.54 **30th November 2021:** Police received a third-party call of a domestic incident between Nevaeh and Derek that sounded 'dangerous'. On arrival, Nevaeh was outside the flat, distressed but would not disclose what had happened. Derek had a ripped tee shirt and scratch to his neck and blamed Nevaeh. Nevaeh had nowhere else to go so was arrested to prevent her returning. DARA refused by Derek but completed and graded as at medium risk of harm.

11.55 **15th December 2021:** Nevaeh saw her GP for routine matter.

11.56 **19th December 2021:** Police received a report of arguing between Nevaeh and Derek. On arrival, no further action as playing a noisy video game together whilst drinking.

11.57 **23rd December 2021:** Nevaeh had contact with her children and presents shared.

11.58 **Approximately two weeks prior to the 16th of January:** Autopsy report identifies strangulation injuries to Nevaeh.

11.59 **6th January 2022:** Police received a call from Derek stating that Nevaeh had beaten him up and thrown objects at him. Due to a delay in attending, Derek called again to state he now had a hostage (later admitted that was just to get a response). Derek told officers that Nevaeh had left and had called to defend himself, stating he didn't want to make a complaint because Nevaeh was on licence. DARA refused but graded as medium risk of harm. Filed ABH '*Due to the high number of DA reports, efforts are being concentrated on those matters where there is a potential of a successful outcome"*.

11.60 **7th to 12th January 2022:** Nevaeh did not make Probation appointments stating she had covid.

11.61 **12th January 2022:** Last recorded text message on Nevaeh's phone from Derek: states '*You started on the 16th, I will finish this game'*.

11.62 **12th January 2022:** Children's Social Care record a 3-month review of contact between Nevaeh and her children. Contact has been positive and to continue.

11.63 **14th January 2022:** Nevaeh reported to police having been a victim of a robbery for her Samsung tablet whilst walking in Primrose Hill on the 10th of January.

11.64 **19th January 2022:** Following a report from Nevaeh's mother that Nevaeh was missing, police entered her flat and found her deceased, in her bed, with severe head injuries.

12 Overview of Known Information

12.1 At the commencement of the scoping period, Housing agencies were aware that Nevaeh was homeless and that she was in a relationship with Derek. They had received a report of Derek being seen with a machete, but this does not appear to have been reported to the police.

12.2 Children's Social Care were aware that Nevaeh had suffered domestic abuse and problematic substance use, and this was a primary cause of Nevaeh chaotic

life at the time her children were placed into care due to emotional abuse and the risks her children faced. They were also aware that Nevaeh wished to resume contact with her children, this being a constant throughout.

12.3 The police and probation service were aware that Derek had a violent past and had been sentenced to imprisonment for a wounding and for a domestic assault on his girlfriend, and aware of the way he carried out the assault. Probation assessed Derek to present a medium risk of harm to the public, particularly within a relationship.

12.4 The police were aware of Dereks offending history and previous licence conditions would have been recorded on their systems. They were aware of the previous imprisonment for domestic abuse and that Derek was reported for domestic abuse incidents between himself and Nevaeh, and between himself and his mother, both of whom showed they were scared of him. They were also aware that Derek had been in possession of controlled substances with intent to supply and had access to weapons. They knew he had assaulted his landlord.

12.5 The police were aware of counter allegations by Derek to Nevaeh and arrested Nevaeh on one occasion for assault on Derek. They were aware of Navaehs licence conditions and MAPPA status.

12.6 GP services were aware that Nevaeh suffered from long term depression for which she received medication.

12.7 Change, Grow, Live were aware from Nevaeh that she smoked crack cocaine, cannabis and drank alcohol.

12.8 Whilst in prison for Arson, probation and GP were aware that Nevaeh had attempted suicide and had issues with mental health. They knew she had undertaken work to become sober.

12.9 On prison release, probation was aware of Navaehs previous need for alcohol and substances and incorporated this into licence conditions. They were aware that she wished to stay sober, being highly motivated to do so to see her children. Probation assessed Nevaeh to be a medium risk of harm to the public and categorised her as a MAPPA offender, Category 2 Violent Offender, suitable for management at level 1. The police were also aware of Nevaeh's MAPPA status.

12.10 Probation were aware that Nevaeh chose to move in with Derek on release and permitted this within licence conditions.

13 Conclusions

13.1 Nevaeh was a young woman of 32 years of age when she was killed by her partner, the perpetrator, Derek. Nevaeh had complex needs stemming from a violent childhood where she witnessed violence, domestic abuse and criminality. This resulted in enduring trauma and the use of substances and alcohol from an early age to cope. Trauma impacted her life choices which in turn ensured Nevaeh continued to be exposed to traumatic events into adulthood, namely violent and controlling relationships, and the placement of her children into the care of Children's Social Care through domestic abuse and substance use. Losing her ability to parent caused Nevaeh to seek comfort in crack cocaine but she never lost her drive to be reunited with her children.

13.2 The fact that Nevaeh suffered from trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder was never identified by agencies and she was not managed with a trauma-based approach. Interactions were managed on a case-by-case basis at face value as they arose with no agency applying professional curiosity to understand her trauma and how that influenced how she presented or made decisions. When drunk, Nevaeh committed an act of causing Arson with Intent to Endanger Life, which resulted in a two-year prison sentence, and she remained on licence conditions until her death. Nevaeh was released from prison as a MAAPA Category 2 Violent Offender, managed at level 1 by the Probation Service.

13.3 No agency took a holistic view of Nevaeh's risky relationship with Derek and did not consider the fact he was a convicted violent abuser who had served two prison sentences for violence, one of which was on a girlfriend whilst she slept in bed, in any assessments when there had been opportunities to do so by the police and probation service. An opportunity to manage Dereks risk was missed when he did not complete a licence requirement to complete a dedicated domestic abuser programme and for which he was not sanctioned by the Community Rehabilitation Community, (CRC),[11]. A lack of professional curiosity by the Probation Service prevented Dereks risk to Nevaeh ever being established. On release from prison, ineffective risk management allowed Nevaeh to live with Derek, unchallenged, when that could and should have been prevented.

13.4 In the scoping period, the police attended a total of 7 reported domestic abuse incidents between Derek and Nevaeh, and 4 reported incidents by Derek to his mother. Each incident was managed individually with no consideration that Derek could be a risk to Nevaeh or a high-risk high- harm perpetrator of domestic

[11] CRC since disbanded and all offender management back within Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

abuse. Outcomes were focused purely on a criminal justice outcome and closed when this objective could not be met.

13.5 No police incident was ever graded above a medium risk due to Dereks known dangerousness not being considered at any point. This prevented an opportunity for a referral to MARAC due to the police failing to correctly identify the level of risk Nevaeh was subject to, a situation reinforced by the specialist Early Intervention Team service. The police did not consider protective orders that could have prevented Derek being able to return home to Nevaeh after she reported him for a serious crime, leaving Derek free to return unchallenged and angry at what she had done. After this, Nevaeh did not report any further abuse to the police.

13.6 This impacted on Nevaeh when the police attended subsequent reported incidents and she would not disclose what had occurred, leaving Derek the only person spoken to, and his version of events being recorded. This resulted in Nevaeh being unfairly labelled a domestic abuse perpetrator, with no understanding of counter allegations demonstrated or an assessment of her risk of harm completed.

13.7 The police failed to identify that Derek was coercively controlling Nevaeh and manipulating the police to do so, Derek having falsely reported a hostage situation to ensure he could tell the police that Nevaeh was on licence conditions, whilst having no intention of making a formal report. After Nevaeh left to live with relatives, Derek coercively controlled Nevaeh by sending images of himself threatening suicide, resulting in Nevaeh reaching out to the police for help. However, the coercion was not identified and the report not recorded as a domestic abuse incident nor risk assessed, leaving Nevaeh under Dereks control and indeed, as he intended, she returned to him, reinforcing Derek's power over Nevaeh.

13.8 Nevaeh faced many barriers to engaging with agencies. Key barriers for Nevaeh were potentially a deep concern that any involvement with agencies would be reported to Children's Social Care and adversely impact on her seeing her children. Also, the existence of a potential Trauma Bond between Nevaeh and Derek. Agencies did not understand Nevaeh's barriers to engagement, and it is essential that barriers to engagement are considered and understood within safeguarding.

13.9 Ultimately, Nevaeh stayed with Derek at a dangerous point in their relationship after he was on police bail for a crime Nevaeh had reported him for, referencing this act in a threatening text prior to her death. He was able to exert coercive control over Nevaeh and ensured she remained with him, with his risks to her

unidentified by agencies until he brutally murdered Nevaeh when she was in bed, asleep and unable to defend herself.

13.10 There had, though, been opportunities for probation to have understood some risk had they been informed about police engagement with Nevaeh. However, despite Derek explicitly telling the police that Nevaeh was on licence conditions, the police did not formally identify this, and they never informed the Probation Service about any interaction with Nevaeh when they should have done so, and this failed Nevaeh. Nor did the police refer Nevaeh to Probation as a MAPPA offender suspected of having committed a criminal offence. In consequence, intelligence sharing was inadequate and requires urgent assessment to improve.

13.11 Not being informed as they should have been, prevented Probation being able to assess Navaehs needs or to assess if Nevaeh had breached her licence conditions requiring consideration for a recall to prison to prevent re-offending. Importantly, it prevented Nevaeh's personal situation and reports of domestic abuse being directly known about to Probation, preventing an opportunity to support her at a critical time when she was withdrawing from engagement, two weeks before her homicide. However, Probation did have wider opportunities to identify Navaehs needs through their many contacts had they properly assessed the information that was known to them and consider effective interventions, but they failed to do so.

13.12 Nevaeh's needs are silent through the scoping period and the risk to her life unidentified from a relationship with a known perpetrator of domestic abuse through no agency looking at the relationship through a lens of risk to Nevaeh. She should not have been living with Derek, a dangerous man, not identified as such through a lack of enquiring or quality risk assessments. Patterns of escalating abuse were not identified which left him able to escalate abuse to a point of homicide, unchallenged. Coventry must develop better processes to identify and manage high-risk, high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse.

13.13 Nevaeh was viewed through the lens of primarily being an offender but even this did not support her when opportunities for information sharing within the criminal justice system did not happen. There is little evidence that she was listened to, believed and protected as a victim of domestic abuse, leaving Nevaeh very vulnerable and unprotected. She was deeply affected through life's experiences which impacted on what she chose to disclose but this was not understood.

13.14 It is not possible to state that Nevaeh's violent death could have been directly prevented had agencies identified the risk, given the impulsive nature of Derek's attack that could have happened at any point. However, it is possible to state

that unless safeguarding is enhanced to promote professional curiosity, that better quality information sharing exists, that holistic and quality assessments of risk and vulnerability are undertaken that include known historical information, and an understanding of how perpetrators use coercive and controlling behaviour, other young woman in Nevaeh's situation will be at risk of serious harm and death from domestic abuse perpetrators in Coventry. Barriers to engagement must be better understood to see the real lived experience for complex victims and steps taken to understand and support how they can engage in a way that is meaningful to them. Better safeguarding is necessary to enhance the identification and reporting of domestic abuse and better identification of violent domestic abuse offenders apparent, as a means of protecting victims from future domestic homicide.

14 Lessons Learned from Analysis

How Effective were Agencies in Responding to the Needs of Nevaeh:

14.1 Lesson1:

The police have to make a decision on who to record as a suspect and who to record as a victim to satisfy the Connect crime recording system. This can be to the detriment of domestic abuse victims who have been incorrectly blamed through coercive behaviour or through insufficient information gained by the police on which to properly make that assessment.

14.2 Lesson 2:

No agency has recorded any information about Nevaeh's background or identified her long standing issues of trauma and responded accordingly. This is due to not having an opportunity to engage with Nevaeh but also for the police, probation, GP and Children's Social Care, a lack of professional curiosity to ask and understand her historical and current needs.

Barriers to Engagement:

14.3 Lesson 3:

A lack of systems to share information between Change, Grow, live and Probation about licence conditions, prevented a joint approach to enhancing the ability to engage with Nevaeh to manage her substance issues. It is acknowledged that joint working systems have been improved since through development of a working contract and co-located staff.

14.4 Lesson 4

Nevaeh faced significant barriers to engagement that impacted on interactions with agencies. Safeguarding policies and training must reflect the existence of such barriers and enable practitioners to have the tools they need to identify the needs of victims and seek ways to meaningfully engage, accepting that there may be an underlying reason for non-engagement and that they are not just changing their mind where they disengage.

Identification and Management of Risk to Nevaeh:

14.5 Lesson 5

The police did not consider Derek's previous offending history and include it in any assessment or management of reported domestic abuse incidents, and did not consider their statutory duties under Claires Law, preventing identification of risk of harm to Nevaeh at the time and in the future.

14.6 Lesson 6

The police did not identify that Nevaeh was at a high risk of harm after she had been subject to violence and reported Derek for a serious drugs related crime, preventing a referral to MARAC.

14.7 Lesson 7

The police did not support Nevaeh by consideration of a Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN), or advice about other civil orders that may have helped her at a point she actively sought help and was engaged.

14.8 Lesson 8

Information sharing from the police to probation was non-existent. Licence conditions that Nevaeh had potentially breached were not identified when they should have been and the fact that Nevaeh was a MAPPA offender under the management of probation should have been reported. The lack of sharing information directly impacted on risks by and to Nevaeh being assessed by probation.

14.9 Lesson 9

The police managed all domestic incidents on a case-by-case basis, at face value, with a focus on judicial outcomes. There was no consideration of the wider situation for Nevaeh, and she was viewed as the abuser without consideration that she may also be at risk. At no point was Dereks offending history recorded in assessments.

14.10 Lesson 10

Nevaeh was not identified by the police as being at risk of coercive and controlling behaviour post separation thorough Derek threatening suicide and sending explicit images to Nevaeh.

14.11 Lesson 11

The Probation Service did not make adequate checks on Nevaeh's intended accommodation, or intended co-habitee, on release from prison to identify known risks posed by Derek and take steps to seek alternative arrangements. Consequently, Probation did not adequately consider risk to Nevaeh and prevent her living with Derek after she stated her intention to do so, despite being fully able to access his offending history and being aware of Nevaeh's vulnerabilities.

14.12 Lesson 12

The Probation Service did not exercise professional curiosity at a point when Nevaeh had expressed difficulties in her relationship with Derek and this prevented identifying Nevaeh's current risk being known to them when there had been an opportunity to do so and which could have prompted enquiries with the police and Children's Social Care.

14.13 Lesson 13

Nevaeh had been on licence conditions at the time of her homicide and had breached her conditions. However, the probation Service were not aware of this due to poor information sharing by the police and did not have an option to recall Nevaeh at any point. An opportunity to refer Nevaeh to Change, Grow, Live for support in the community to manage potential future substance use and which would have prompted the requirements of the licence condition for Nevaeh, was missed.

14.14 Lesson 14

Children's Social Care did not consider Nevaeh's current relationship with Derek, and any risks that may have created, when working with Nevaeh to resume contact with her children.

Identification of Risk posed to Nevaeh from Derek:

14.15 Lesson 15

Dereks presenting coercive and controlling behaviour was not identified by probation and this further prevented his ongoing risk to Nevaeh being identified prior to her homicide.

14.16 Lesson 16

Through the review it is apparent that counter allegations of abuse made by Derek have not been challenged and Navaeh's context not understood which has prevented Dereks risk being properly identified and enabled him to exert control over Nevaeh through reports to the police. Domestic abuse training must incorporate an understanding of counter allegations to better protect victims.

14.17 Lesson 17

Dereks abusive behaviour escalated, the features of which were reflected in the 8-step timeline to homicide. Understanding the risks posed by escalating behaviour must be incorporated into safeguarding training and risk assessments to protect future victims of domestic abuse.

14.18 Lesson 18

Derek did not complete a specialist piece of work aimed at addressing perpetrator behaviour when he was required to do so whilst subject to licence conditions, and this was not challenged or enforced. Likewise with other breaches whilst subject to post-sentence supervision. This was a missed opportunity to manage Dereks risk, but it is acknowledged there has been much change since Nevaeh died with safeguarding at a higher priority.

14.19 Lesson 19

A lack of a wider assessment of Derek as a domestic abuse perpetrator prevented his identification as a serious risk to Nevaeh and his mother. It is not clear in Coventry how high-risk, high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse are identified currently, with a lack of understanding of PDPs locally apparent. The current ISA is not effective. Coventry needs to develop clear pathways to identification of domestic abuse perpetrators who may harm and incorporate this into safeguarding policy and procedure, supported by an effective ISA, to ensure multi-agency routine identification and management of high-risk, high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse in Coventry.

14.20 Lesson 20

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 Nevaeh's circumstances and which would have enhanced knowledge of her lived experience and risk from harm.

15 Recommendations

15.1 Recommendation 1

The Coventry Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board should continue to assess and ensure that local safeguarding agencies identify and utilise a trauma informed approach to better understand and protect victims of domestic abuse.

15.2 Recommendation 2

The Home Office should take cognisance of the requirement for police crime recording systems to have to identify a suspect or a victim for recording purposes and understand the impact this has on victims of domestic abuse and how they are perceived going forwards.

15.3 Recommendation 3

The Coventry Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board should ensure their partner agencies evaluate and revise where necessary, safeguarding policy, procedure and training materials to ensure they encompass all learning from this review and is adequately understood and incorporated by safeguarding practitioners in Coventry into practice.

15.4 Recommendation 4

West Midlands Police and Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service should undertake a review of information sharing capabilities between themselves and within their respective agencies to ensure all relevant risk intelligence is readily available and used and shared wherever necessary to identify and protect victims of domestic abuse.

15.5 Recommendation 5

The Coventry Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board should be reassured that their partner agencies review and revise how they identify and manage dangerous domestic abuse perpetrators to ensure there are clearly defined processes that incorporate national strategies, development and procedure to ensure a multi-agency approach to referrals and management of High Risk, High Harm perpetrators of domestic abuse is incorporated into domestic abuse procedures in Coventry, supported by an effective ISA; and which are known about, promote confidence and for which staff receive adequate training, to reduce harm to domestic abuse victims. .

15.6 Recommendation 6

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 within domestic abuse procedures.

15.7 Recommendation 7

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. West Midlands Police should review and revise how they identify and manage Claire's Law to better protect victims.

2. West Midlands Police should review and revise how they consider and apply DVPN's and other civil orders to better protect victims.

3. West Midlands Police to review how they assess risk in domestic abuse cases to ensure historical information is able to be collated and included in assessments to protect victims and identify perpetrators.

4. Housing Support to train staff to identify the signs of domestic abuse and provide appropriate advice and support.

5. Housing Support to issue new guidance for Housing staff.

6. Change, Grow, Live to develop 're-engagement plan' to enhance engagement with service users.

7. Change, Grow, Live to work to improve details held within case notes.

8. University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust to ensure a systematic response when people leave A and E before assessment.

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

10. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service develop workforces understanding of professional curiosity and gathering information about family members/partners, particularly when assessing and approving accommodation.

11. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service develop Handovers between practitioners and agencies to be recorded and to include a review of the current circumstances and the assessment of risk. Both parties should employ professional curiosity during this process.

12. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to ensure that given the nature of risk, all future relationship and accommodation move require information exchange with the police service and children's service/local authority to confirm history/recent information and the nature of risk between those involved.

13. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service to ensure management oversight to be utilised to facilitate discussion around practice and ensure appropriate policy framework is implemented to manage individuals pre and post release from prison.