

Domestic Homicide Review

Overview Report

**Report into the death of Ms FC
during the period 29th June to 1st July 2013**

Report produced by Patrick Watson

Independent DHR Chairman & Author

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Introduction

1. This Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) was conducted following the tragic homicide of Ms FC over the weekend of Saturday 29th June to Monday 1st July 2013. The precise day of Ms FC's homicide is not known but she was certified dead on Monday 1st July 2013. The police were not able to establish a precise time of death. This was the second domestic homicide review to be carried out under the auspices of the Wandsworth Community Safety Partnership (WCSP). It was carried out in accordance with the Home Office guidance and section 9 (3) of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004.
2. The review of Ms FC's homicide began with an initial panel meeting on 18th September 2013 where it was agreed to 'pause' the review until after the criminal proceedings in 2014.
3. This report outlines the circumstances of the case and the findings of the review. This review was undertaken to examine the role of the agencies involved with a view to learning lessons from the case and, where needed, to alter practice in order to improve outcomes for victims and their families involved in future similar cases. The report: -
 - a) summarises the key facts of the case and the sequence of events;
 - b) summarises the key issues, key decisions and whether with hindsight different decisions or actions could have been taken;
 - c) identifies examples of good practice and notes where systems need to improve;
 - d) carries out an analysis on the Terms of Reference;
 - e) outlines the conclusions and lessons learned from the review; and
 - f) details both recommendations from individual agencies and from the Review Panel.

Ms FC Family input

4. The panel wish to send their condolences to the family of Ms FC and thank them for their hugely valuable input to this process.
5. Further detail of Ms FC's family involvement is given on page 30 of this report.

Mr HS Family input

6. The family of Mr HS were invited to contribute to this review but they responded that they would only participate if this was agreed by Mr HS. We also invited the perpetrator to contribute but did not receive a response to any of our correspondence.

Process

7. On Monday 1st July 2013 the Metropolitan Police discovered Ms FC had been murdered at her home address by Mr HS. The Metropolitan Police subsequently informed the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) of the homicide as it met the criteria (set out in paragraph 8 below) for a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) and asked them to consider whether a review should take place.
8. A review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by-

(a) a person to whom he/she was related or with whom he/she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship;

9. The Wandsworth Partnership took responsibility for this review as prescribed by relevant legislation and guidance. They appointed Patrick Watson as independent chair and author of this report. He is fully independent of all the agencies involved in the review.
10. In terms of the timescale for the completion of the review, the Home Office guidance suggests that it should be completed within a six month period. This timescale, when it relates to an on-going criminal prosecution, is near impossible to comply with and is simply not a practical option. Even without an on-going criminal prosecution it is not considered by us to be a realistic timescale for completion of a complex review. The police requested that we 'pause' the review until after the trial had been completed in order not to prejudice the on-going investigation and prosecution. We also agreed not to approach any of the witnesses or family until the trial had been concluded. The trial was held at Southwark Crown Court and finished on 19th March 2014. Our aim was to produce a draft report for consideration by the Wandsworth Partnership by the end of November 2014.
11. A panel was formed of the following members:

Patrick Watson - Independent Chairman and Overview Report Author

Stewart Low - Head of Community Safety, Wandsworth Borough Council

Stewart Low, in addition to his role as a panel member, also worked in partnership with the chairman of the review panel on managing the significant associated organisational work involved.

Antonia De Lima minuted the meetings of the review panel and carried out much appreciated secretarial support.

Jenny Iliff, Domestic Violence Co-ordinator, acted as domestic abuse advisor to the panel.

Mary Burke, HR Business Manager acted as HR advisor to the panel

Clive Simmonds - Safeguarding Adults Policy & Development Manager

DS Angie Barton - Metropolitan Police, Critical Incident Advisory Team

DS Rory Wilkinson - Metropolitan Police, Murder Investigation Team

Dr Ash Paul - Public Health Consultant, Wandsworth

Anna Twomlow - Victim Support Manager Wandsworth

12. The panel met on the following dates

18th September 2013

11th September 2014

2nd October 2014

3rd November 2014

13. The final version of the report was approved by the Home Office in February 2015. During this time taken to reach this stage contact with Ms FC's family was maintained to keep them fully briefed on the outcome and to answer any questions emanating from the report.

Purpose and Scope of the review

14. The purpose and scope of the review is to:
 - a) Seek to establish whether the events of 29th June to 1st July 2013 could have been predicted, prevented or the likelihood of it happening could have been reduced.
 - b) Establish the facts that led to the incident that occurred between 29th June and 1st July 2013 and identify whether there are any lessons to be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and agencies worked together to safeguard the victim and her family.
 - c) Identify what those lessons are, how they will be acted upon and what is expected to change as a result.
 - d) Establish whether the agencies or inter agency responses were appropriate leading up to and at the time of the incident that occurred between 29th June and 1st July.
 - e) Establish whether agencies have appropriate policies and procedures and associated monitoring procedures to respond to domestic abuse and to recommend any changes as a result of the review process. The Review will exclude consideration of how Ms FC died or who was culpable; that is a matter for the Coroner and Criminal Courts respectively to determine.

Terms of Reference

15. The key terms of reference for the review were to:
 - a) Review the involvement of each individual agency, statutory and non-statutory, with Ms FC and Mr HS between 1st January 2007 and 1st July 2013.
 - b) Summarise the involvement of agencies prior to Monday 1st July 2013
16. In terms of the timescale in 15a above, the panel agreed on a proportionate approach in order to focus on more recent events. While a decision was taken to initially focus on the period from January 2007, each contributor to the review was nevertheless asked to examine their records prior to this period and report on any information that appeared to have significance to this case. As the review progressed further information did come to light that was considered significant and this is acknowledged and reflected in the narrative chronology of events.
17. One of the most significant factors in this homicide was the lack of contact with statutory or voluntary agencies by either the victim or the perpetrator. The only agency in a position

to provide information to the panel was the Metropolitan Police and even their involvement was not extensive. As a result, they were the only agency responsible for providing details of their involvement, through chronologies of contact and an individual management review.

18. This lack of involvement with statutory and voluntary agencies meant that the panel did not have access to the normal amount of records that would have enabled a comprehensive timeline to be established. As a result the timeline set out in this report is quite broad as it is derived from the recollections of friends and family who had difficulty being precise about the specific time of relevant events.
19. Where relevant the contributing agency (in this case only the Metropolitan Police) were required to:
 - c) Provide a chronology of their involvement with Ms FC and Mr HS during the time period.
 - d) Search all their records outside the identified time periods to ensure no relevant information was omitted.
 - e) Provide an individual management review if necessary: identifying the facts of their involvement with Ms FC and/or Mr HS, critically analysing the service they provided in line with the specific terms of reference; identifying any recommendations for practice or policy in relation to their agency.
20. In order to critically analyse the background to the incident, the terms of reference required specific analysis of the following:
 - f) Communication and co-operation between different agencies involved with Ms FC and/or Mr HS
 - g) Identify lessons to be learnt from the case about the way in which local professionals and agencies worked together to safeguard the victim and her family.
 - h) Identify what those lessons are, how they will be acted upon and what is expected to change as a result.
 - i) Establish whether the agencies or inter agency responses were appropriate leading up to and at the time of the incident over the period of 29th June 2013 to 1st July 2013.
 - j) Establish whether agencies have appropriate policies and procedures and associated monitoring procedures to respond to domestic abuse and to recommend any changes as a result of the review process.
 - k) Review the care and treatment, including risk assessment and risk management of Mr HS in relation to his primary and secondary mental health care.

and to:

- l) Seek to establish whether the events over the period 29th June to 1st July 2013 could have been predicted, prevented or the likelihood of it happening could have been reduced. The evidential standards applied being on the balance of probabilities. For example if an event 'probably' would have been avoided, had certain steps taken place, then the balance of probability test is satisfied. If an event 'possibly' would have been avoided had certain steps taken place, then the test of the balance of probability is not satisfied.
- m) Examine whether information sharing and communication within and between agencies regarding the Ms FC and Mr HS was effective and comprehensive; did it enable joint understanding and working between agencies; were all appropriate agencies involved in the information sharing.
- n) Examine whether the sharing of information was sufficient to facilitate "joined up working".
- o) Examine whether previous "learning" from local or national cases had been acted upon.
- p) Examine whether data protection issues or client confidentiality concerns impeded the sharing or dissemination of information.
- q) Examine whether there were any early warning signs of aggression or violent behaviour and what actions followed.
- r) Examine whether the level of risk posed by the perpetrator was assessed and addressed properly; whether there was an appropriate intervention plan.
- s) Examine whether equality and diversity issues were considered appropriately by all the agencies involved with the family of Ms FC.
- t) Seek the involvement of the family, employers, neighbours & friends to provide a robust analysis of the events.
- u) Take account of the criminal proceedings and coroners' inquest in terms of timing and contact with the family and/or the alleged perpetrator.
- v) Produce a report which summarises the chronology of the events, including the actions of involved agencies, analyses and comments on the actions taken and makes any required recommendations regarding safeguarding of families and children where domestic abuse is a feature.

Ms FC Family Composition

21. Ms FC was an only child of white British parents. Her father moved abroad when she was about one year old and consequently she had limited contact or relationship with him again until she was an adult – around 1995. Her mother remarried and she became part of the established family network of her stepfather. The family relationships of Ms FC are set

out below.

Name	Gender	Relationship
Mrs BS	Female	Mother
Mr XE	Male	Father
Mr XS1	Male	Step Father
Mrs XS2	Female	Wife of Step Brother
Mr XS2	Male	Step Brother
Mr XS3	Male	Step Brother

Profile of Agencies involved in the review

22. The DHR panel contacted the following statutory and voluntary agencies regarding this review to ascertain any involvement they may have had with the victim or perpetrator. Of all those contacted only the Metropolitan Police had interaction with the victim or perpetrator to submit.

Whittington Health NHS – Psychological Therapies, Community Health Services, Emergency Department
Probation Service
Wandsworth Borough Council
Haringay Borough Council
Haringay & Islington Mental Health Trust
Islington Borough Council
Victim Support Wandsworth who carried out a national enquiry
St George’s Hospital
Westminister Hospital
General Practitioner – Ms FC
General Practitioner – Mr HS

In addition we carried out colleague interviews at her place of work and interviewed the Head of Human Resources to obtain information on workplace policies for staff. We also carried a small scale survey to ascertain the extent of Domestic Abuse support and publicity in the areas near her home, her work and the home of the perpetrator.

23. The Metropolitan Police Service provides the police service for London. It employs around 31,000 officers together with about 13,000 police staff and 2,600 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The MPS is also being supported by more than 5,100 volunteer police officers in the Metropolitan Special Constabulary (MSC). The Metropolitan Police Services covers an area of 620 square miles and a population of 7.2 million.

Invitation to the perpetrator to contribute

24. We invited the perpetrator to contribute to this review. He had expressed his remorse at his trial and we reasoned that one way of actively demonstrating this would have been to contribute information on how tragedies like this could be prevented in the future. We sent recorded delivery invitations to him in prison on two occasions and did not receive any response or acknowledgement.

Terminology

25. A number of terms and abbreviations have been used in this report and these are clarified below.

MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
DA	Domestic Abuse
DV	Domestic Violence
IRIS	Identification and Referral to Improve Safety
NPD	Narcissistic Personality Disorder
PNC	Police National Computer
DETs	
CRIS	Crime Reporting Information System
VAWG	Violence Against Women & Girls
WSN	Wandsworth Safety Net

Definition of Domestic Abuse (pre September 2012)

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse [psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional] between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality'

Definition of Domestic Abuse (post September 2012)

'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; emotional'.

Details of the homicide

26. On Monday 1st July 2013 at 10am police were called to an address in London SW by Mr HS who said there had been a stabbing at that address. Whilst on the telephone to the police operator Mr HS stated he believed the female occupier was dead and that he still had the knife with him. On police arrival he opened the flat door and was immediately detained. On searching the flat Ms FC was found deceased in the bath. She had puncture wounds to her chest and abdomen. Her life was pronounced extinct at 10.18am by the attending London Ambulance Service paramedics.
27. Mr HS responded to questions by police which indicated that he stabbed Ms FC during the early hours of Monday 1st July 2013 as he thought she had been having an affair. He was arrested for her murder at 10.20am and taken to a local police station. Following a search of the premises a weapon, described as a Swiss Army knife, was found.
28. At the police station Mr HS refused to enter into any further dialogue with the officers to

explain the events that led up to the murder of Ms FC.

29. A post-mortem examination at St George's Hospital concluded she died of multiple stab wounds. She had been stabbed 26 times with a multi tool which Mr HS described as a Swiss Army knife. Despite being found in the bath there was no evidence of any drowning. The post mortem revealed the attack was so ferocious that the knife blade pierced her heart and lungs. The multiple stab wounds were distributed principally to the front of the chest, but also to both arms and to the back of her legs. The wounds to the palm of her hand were consistent with her trying to grasp the blade. The spread of the stab wounds pointed to the conclusion that she must have tried desperately to defend herself. The post-mortem found Ms FC died from shock, haemorrhage and multiple stab wounds.

Ms FC - Victim Background

30. Ms FC was a white British middle class female and was aged 40 at the time of her death. She lived in a small studio flat in South West London. Friends and colleagues described her as a very well educated and highly intellectual woman. She gained a BA in languages from Cambridge in 1995 and this was followed by a MPhil in European literature two years later. In 2003 she was awarded a MSc in Public Policy and Management from London University.
31. Ms FC lived in rented accommodation in various locations in London until 2005/06 when she bought a small flat in South London. Her friends and family lived south of the river and that is where she wanted to be. She was not cohabitating with Mr HS who lived in North London. Her father attached some significance to her purchasing a property in South London. "I got the impression that her personal space was being invaded and she would do things to separate herself from Mr HS. I think that is why she wanted to move away from North London.....It is strange to move to South London when you work in North London and your boyfriend also lives in North London".
32. Her character, personality and disposition are important factors in understanding events and her reaction and that is why reference is made below to how she was perceived by others.
33. She held a range of senior positions in the public sector managing a variety of research and organisational development projects where her strategic skills were utilised. She was clearly seen as a high flier who would excel at whatever tasks she would take on. She was held in high regard by those who she worked with and those who had overall responsibility for her performance.
34. She demonstrated a strong commitment to public service and in standing up for the rights and interests of those who were less well off or in need. Ms FC played a leading role in delivering key council priorities which made a tangible difference to the lives of local residents - including tackling child poverty and implementing the Council's Fairness Commission recommendations which aim to close the gap between the Borough's rich and poor.
35. She worked as an external consultant with a London local authority from 2007 to 2009. In 2009 she was recruited as a full time employee by the same local authority. At the time of her death she held the position of joint SSSSSSSS. Her role at the Council was of a

strategic/policy nature. She was at heart a strategic analyst or problem solver who developed policies and solutions to high level problems.

36. She did not work directly with clients in her role with the Council. A few months before she died she took on management of the No Recourse to Public Funds team who did have some clients that had experienced domestic abuse and after checking with the team it was concluded that she did not do any direct work with these clients.
37. She had a strong yearning to have children, preferably her own, but she researched options such as adopting or fostering. In 2013 when her employer was cutting back on expenditure and reducing jobs she offered to job share with a colleague who was on maternity leave and she then worked three days a week. Friends were of the view that her desire to have a family may have been one of the triggers for her offer to reduce her hours.
38. After collecting a great deal of information from family, friends and colleagues we were left in no doubt that she was universally considered a very caring and compassionate woman who always put the welfare of others at the top of her agenda of priorities. One friend described her as “an extraordinary person based on her levels of empathy and sympathy for others. Very selfless”.
39. Her staff team at the Council described her as “intelligent and thoughtful and those who worked in her team say she was the best manager they ever had - she gave her time and energy to ensuring their development”.
40. A quote from one friend could equally apply to all her friends view of her – “She was wonderful – smart, funny, caring, committed”.
41. Another view was typical of people’s reaction to Ms FC – “XXXX was a very warm, caring, giving and compassionate individual who was well loved by many people. She was objective about life, even when things were difficult and affected her own emotions she would always see the good in things or make light of difficult situations”.
42. When discussing Ms FC with friends and colleagues there was one consistent theme that was voiced every time and this was that despite her friendliness and caring nature she was a very private person. She guarded her private life and would always subtly turn conversations around away from discussions about her and towards how others were doing.
43. Her life appeared to be compartmentalised and this was particularly true in respect of her relationship with Mr HS. Despite a relationship stretching twelve years it was surprising how few of her friends or colleagues had actually met him or knew anything about him.

Mr HS – Perpetrator Background

44. Mr HS was born in 1967 and was aged 46 when he murdered Ms FC. His mother was from Sierra Leone and his father was from Uganda. His father arrived in the UK from Gambia in 1962 with “only a suitcase and the clothes on his back”. Mr HS had three siblings – one brother and two sisters. He was born in the UK and was Black British.

45. Both his mother and brother had mental health problems and each had been sectioned and detained under the Mental Health Act. The date of his mother's sectioning is not known but his brother was sectioned in 2005. His mother had an affair when he was 15 and this was the beginning of the breakdown of the family. The affair was taking place within the family home and he witnessed it taking place. He recalled that this was the beginning of the end for the family and he hated his mother for that. He blamed his mother for destroying the family relationship. His mother returned to Sierra Leone two years later and died in 2001.
46. He described his mother's behaviour as revealing to him the aspects of trust and betrayal that he was later to attribute to Ms FC when he felt he had been let down.
47. When Mr HS was 14 his father was diagnosed as having an asbestos disease and was in ill health. His father could not cope on his own when his wife left the family home and two siblings were put into boarding school but it is not clear whether this was organised and paid for by the local authority or by the family. Mr HS contended that the breakup of the family led to his siblings "having problems with the law".
48. At aged 17 he found himself in the position of having to try to keep the family together.
49. His father who he described as his inspiration died in 2004 and this had a tremendous impact on him.
50. He wanted to improve himself and worked hard and determinedly on this. He went to further education classes and on to university gaining a long range of engineering and electrical qualifications. He gained a MBA in 2005. He worked for London Underground as a signal engineer and left in 2001 to join a consultancy firm specialising in underground railways. He left this company in 2006 and joined another consultancy firm.
51. He set up a limited company, AAAA, in 2007 to work for himself. Ms FC became the company secretary as the rules at this time required that this position was filled. He held 51% of the ownership with Ms FC holding 49%. Ms FC later worked as a consultant for a local authority under the umbrella of AAAA (for tax purposes) for a period before she became a full time employee of the Council. She resigned from the company in March 2009 and had nothing further to do with it since that date.
52. When working as a consultant Mr HS was highly paid and some of his payment slips indicated an annual salary in excess of £100k.
53. Under his own limited company his finances were not so stable. At times he struggled to find work and had periods of unemployment. It was conjectured at the trial that Mr HS overestimated his own skills and ability and this was not reciprocated by others who were in a position to offer him work.
54. He was described as a very intelligent, hardworking and calm person by his boyhood best friend (PB). He described him in his witness statement as a calm person, not the type to lose his temper quickly or be violent. Another friend (GW) also spoke up for him at the trial describing him as a kind person, always wanting to do things for other people. Usually calm but if you pressed the wrong buttons then he might become less calm.

55. He was someone who clearly worked hard to improve himself in life and given his troubled childhood this was a considerable achievement.
56. He had married in 1996 and was later divorced (finalised in August 2000). This failed marriage is referred to in more detail later in the report.
57. He bought a flat in North London in 1998 and lived there until 2011 when he rented it out as he was planning to take up a two year employment contract in Australia. He experienced problems getting the flat vacated at the end of the lease period.

Narrative Chronology

58. It has not been possible to develop accurate dates for the events that took place because of the lack of official records and the need to have reliance on the memories of friends going back over a very long period. It is important for the reader to appreciate that the vast majority of the information provided in this report has been collected retrospectively from a wide range of sources. Virtually none of it was known by any statutory or voluntary agency or by anyone who was in a position to do anything about it. Those who had any insight only had a limited partial view and certainly not enough to prompt any action on their part.
59. The perpetrator, Mr HS, produced a document which he entitled “My life with XXXX, a woman of many faces”. It was a chronology of the ups and downs of his relationship with Ms FC. It was not initially made available to us but after making representations to the MPS we were provided with a copy of this document. Our concerns about the release of documents will feature in the recommendations of this review.
60. Ms FC and Mr HS met in Spring 2001. They met on the “Tube” and Ms FC was slightly embarrassed about how they had met on the escalator. He told her family that he had noticed her among the crowd and knew instinctively that she was the one for him. He told them he was determined to get to know her. Mr HS saw her every day at the underground station and approached her to ask her out. She agreed to have a coffee with him and the relationship developed from this point. Mr HS described it as a “whirlwind romance” and “I was smitten”.
61. He had a flat in North London at this time and she lived in rented accommodation in various locations. They never cohabited but she often spent time at his flat.
62. Between 2001 and 2003 there is very little known about the development of the relationship.
63. Soon the relationship had started to turn sour and Ms FC wanted it to end. An incident was experienced by two friends who attributed it taking place at vastly different dates on the calendar. One friend was pregnant at the time and recalls the incident taking place during the pregnancy between October 2001 and March 2002 while the other has a recollection of sometime in early 2003. There is no way of knowing which date is correct. If the incident did take place on the earlier date then the negative aspects of this relationship were moving at quite a fast pace.

64. A friend from her university days (SU) recalled an occasion between October 2001 and March 2002 when Ms FC telephoned her to ask for help moving out of Mr HS's flat. She said that she needed to move out of his flat urgently and secretly when he was at work, because she felt unsafe living with him in his flat. She did not want to do the moving out alone because she was frightened of what he would do if he arrived back in the middle of her packing up. She did not go into detail but it was understood between them that he intimidated her physically and psychologically and that she was in danger. SU was shocked at this revelation. It was unusual for Ms FC to ask for help with anything. The reason she had approached SU for this help was because she worked from home, not in an office, on her PhD and therefore had the flexibility to come to London during a working day without taking leave. Ms FC was not aware that SU was pregnant when asking for help. SU felt unable to help her move out as she feared that if Mr HS was violent something could happen to the baby.
65. Ms FC never talked to SU about Mr HS being back in her life again and she assumed that this was because she felt embarrassed to admit they were seeing each other again when she had previously confided that she felt at risk due to his intimidating behaviour. SU recalled at the trial that she felt Ms FC was very secretive about Mr HS.
66. Ms FC then telephoned, QM, a friend from her high school days to ask for help. She recalls the incident as occurring in early 2003. QM recalls it as a rather strange call as Ms FC was whispering in a conspiratorial fashion and the exchange was along the lines of "I need your help. I need to leave. He might come back. I need to leave. HS may come back. I am scared that he might come back". QM sent her boyfriend MS round to the flat to collect her. She got the impression that Ms FC had been living with Mr HS.
67. Ms FC seemed quite panicked and kept checking until MS arrived. He helped her pack and took her to her flat. QM checked later that day that everything was alright but Ms FC did not want to talk about it. She was very embarrassed. QM asked if he had hit her and she said no but added that he had an explosive temper. After this QM found that any discussion about Mr HS was a taboo subject.
68. In August 2003 Mr HS claims that he asked her to marry him and she consented enthusiastically but changed her mind two weeks later saying that she was in therapy and was not emotionally ready to make a commitment. He said that he accepted this because he loved her. He related at his trial that he thought she had a Narcissistic Personality Disorder which was interesting as this appears to have many of the characteristics that his defence claimed that he had.
69. The relationship was back on again before long (dates uncertain) but seems to have ended again in 2004. Mr HS admitted that this separation was due to the intensity of problems he was facing and she made the break. This was at the time that his father had died, his brother had attempted suicide and he himself had his leg in a cast and had restricted mobility.
70. They kept in touch with each other and by March 2005 they were back together. Mr HS had deferred the completion of his MBA in 2004 because of the death of his father and this was finalised in 2005.

71. In 2006 they separated again (reasons unknown) but the break according to him was only short term.
72. In May 2008 Ms FC and Mr HS were at the home of SV who was an ex work colleague of hers and a good friend when they announced they were getting married and that the assembly hall where she worked had been booked for the wedding. SV recalls Mr HS saying in front of him, XXXX and his wife "I've got her now. I've got my prize". SV had a parallel sense that Ms FC did not really want to do this. The wedding never took place. He could not be sure but thought that Mr HS had called it off as Ms FC would not make a complete commitment to him and did not give all of her life to the relationship.
73. Around this time Ms FC discussed her relationship with a friend (ES) she had known for over 20 years and said she was very unhappy. She wanted to end the relationship. She told how he was jealous of her and how he wanted to control who and when she saw people. How he had a temper. She had lost confidence in herself in the relationship. She wanted to end the relationship gently without hurting him.
74. The next most significant and serious break in the relationship was in 2009. Ms FC discovered he had been using online dating. At his trial he claimed that this related to 2005-2006 and it followed a bout of depression following the events in 2004 referred to earlier. His explanation was that following the split in late 2004 he was left alone to ponder how to cope and given that he was immobile online dating seemed the obvious answer. However when they got back together again he continued to engage with meeting people online but "never met anyone in real life. This was a fantasy exercise for me." He added – "Perhaps this was the moment we should have split up for good. But got back together on part need and part want".
75. Ms FC telephoned her friend and work colleague, CC, in a distressed state to talk about how she had discovered that Mr HS had been on dating websites. She advised her to leave. Ms FC had confronted Mr HS and he said that he went on the sites to discuss his relationship with Ms FC with other women and get advice. Ms FC told her that she had made a decision to tell Mr HS that the relationship could not continue. She had decided to get a friend to help her move out as she was scared to do it on her own.
76. Ms FC told her line manager, KJ, who was also a friend that she had broken up with Mr HS. When asked about the break she explained that "he had been a shit" and had been having at least one affair during the course of their relationship if not more than one. KJ did not get the impression that she was upset just that she was getting concerned about Mr HS being difficult around the break up.
77. March 2009 Ms FC informed her friend and line manager KJ of financial issues with Mr HS involving the company AAAA she jointly owned with him. She was the minority owner. She had worked for the Council as an external consultant 2007-2009 until she was employed directly by the Council. Her payments from the Council, while a consultant, were made through the company for tax efficiency reasons. Ms FC informed KJ that he was controlling the money held by the company and not allowing her access. She was trying to extricate herself from the company but he would not let her.
78. Mr HS was complaining that the Council did not process Ms FC's invoices fast enough. Ms FC emailed KJ asking for the invoices to be processed speedily. About the same time he

telephoned the Council a number of times demanding the money owed to Ms FC adding that a share of this was owed to him and he would take the Council to court. On another occasion he was requesting payment of what he called "his money". KJ told Ms FC about these telephone calls and threats and she was very apologetic and embarrassed. She said that she was anxious because he was being difficult and controlling and that this was because she had ended or was ending the relationship.

79. One of Ms FC's friends and work colleagues, AQ, was aware of the relationship with Mr HS and formed an impression of him as "not a nice person. Within their relationship he was controlling and manipulative". Ms FC confided her concern about the relationship and how he was threatening and had been making abusive phone calls and sending texts to her phone asking her to come outside the building to meet him. She said that she felt "boxed in". AQ told of an incident when Mr HS had kicked down Ms FC's front door and that she had to get the locks changed as they had been damaged but could not afford this work because he would not let her have any money. AQ arranged and paid for new locks and for her father to fix the door. She asked Ms FC why he had kicked in the door and her rationale was that he did this so that she would have to engage with him. AQ advised her to take out an injunction but Ms FC said that the thought of going to court and having to talk about her personal problems publicly put her off this course of action.
80. AQ told how Mr HS would come to the Town Hall reception and/or wait outside the building for her. To stop him following her Ms FC would leave the office at random times and take different routes to try and avoid him. She would also vary the times she came to the office.
81. Friends of Ms FC recalled that during this period Ms FC was clearly stressed and looked it. Her hours of work were erratic and she was not her usual focussed self. Her level of concentration was not as good as she appeared pre-occupied. She had good supportive work colleagues who gave her some space during this stressful period. She had established a good solid work reputation and this stood her in good stead to the extent that work colleagues speculated that anyone else other than her would have had their performance questioned.
82. Ms FC contacted her father who she was now re-acquainted with and asked if she could come and stay with him and his wife for a while. She told him that Mr HS was harassing her and she felt frightened. She said that he would hang around outside her flat and that she was frightened of him and did not feel safe at home. Her flat was on the ground floor with windows on both sides. She wanted to move out temporarily until the harassment stopped. She informed her father that he was also harassing her at work and that she had enlisted the help of her colleagues and they would make sure that he was not around when she left or would tell her if he was hanging around outside her place of work. Ms FC stayed with her father for a number of weeks and then returned to her flat in South London.
83. At the end of March 2009, Ms FC telephoned the husband of a friend, CG, as he was a lawyer, to ask for some advice about the problems with AAAA. She told him about her "ex-partner" refusing her access to funds. She told him that her personal relationship had failed and that he had threatened her. He asked her in what way had he threatened her and she replied that he had threatened to kill her. He advised her to report the threats to the police. He was not sure whether she would report the matter to the police and also

advised her to keep a diary to record any significant events or threats as this would be beneficial for any civil or criminal action against Mr HS. After this discussion he heard no more from Ms FC about business or personal problems she was facing.

84. Ms FC appears to have taken the advice to contact the police. She telephoned the police at 11.30 on Sunday 29th March 2009 to report a domestic related incident. She informed them that she was staying at her father's home in South London which her ex-boyfriend did not know. She did not want him contacted by police and refused to provide his telephone number. He had not made threats to physically harm her but had made many calls and sent emails to her. The content of the threats were him texting – "Don't think you are safe". She did not want to press charges and simply wanted police to be aware of this harassment and would call back if the situation escalated. She informed the police operator that Mr HS had been to her home three weeks previously but since then she had been staying with her father and would remain there for the time being. She informed the police that she was going to a solicitor to arrange for Mr HS to get a warning and hoped this would resolve the situation.
85. The police left a voicemail message asking her to attend a local police station to report the matter in person. She made an appointment for the following day which she did not keep. The police followed up the non-appearance with further telephone calls and Ms FC contacted them later that day to state that she had since spoken to Mr HS and he had apologised and promised not to make any further calls. She preferred not to take any further action. As this was initially recorded as a domestic incident the police wanted to speak directly to Ms FC and left further telephone messages for her to contact them. Police officers visited her father's house but she was not at home. Her father was at home and is recorded as being very surprised that police were still trying to speak to her. He stated she was fine and nothing really happened and did not wish to make any report to police. Ms FC finally reported the matter, as requested, at a police station near her place of work and the case was officially closed.
86. The allegation had been risk assessed (and a secondary investigation instigated) by the police who had allocated it to an investigating officer who carried out checks for previous reports and intelligence on both Ms FC and Mr HS. The investigating officer did speak to Ms FC by telephone and she reiterated that she did not want any further police action taken. She had no contact from Mr HS for over a week after one of his friends gave him advice about the matter. The risk assessment was graded as "standard" and closed.
87. In October 2009 Ms FC visited an old university friend (SO) and his wife at his new address. He is clear about the date as he had just moved in to the property. During the visit she asked him for some advice about a company that she and Mr HS both owned and had been set up for tax purposes. She said that Mr HS had threatened to sue her and she wanted some advice on how to respond. His advice was that sometimes, even if you are in the right, it is best to capitulate and cut your losses rather than get involved in a distressing fight. SO was fairly sure at this time that the relationship was over and the dispute was over how to deal with the company post their split.
88. Since finding out about Ms FC's death SO looked up the company on Companies House website which showed that she had disposed of her shares and terminated her appointment as secretary of the company on 1st March 2009. However, the termination form was electronically filed on 21st December 2009 and backdated to 1st March 2009. The

annual return recording the disposal of her shares was electronically filed on 14th January 2010. The forms were all filed by Mr HS. The significance of this information is that everything was done by Mr HS and we know nothing about the extent that Ms FC participated. In paragraph 77 above we related how in March 2009 she told her line manager how she was trying to extricate herself from the company but he would not let her.

89. A friend and colleague recalled how at the end of a workplace training course with a colleague they talked about her relationship with Mr HS with Ms FC referring to him as her ex and adding that it was a difficult relationship which was in the past. She said that she worried about his mental health. She spoke of him as a liability, as someone who was damaged and who was not well connected socially.
90. We know that they were back together again in 2010 but the difficulties were not fully resolved. There were examples of him becoming paranoid about what Ms FC was getting up to, expressing jealousy and seeking to control and manage her relationship with others. Mr HS told how his brother was having a difficult time in prison and this together with work pressures affected the relationship with Ms FC. He began to contemplate a new start working abroad.
91. The next time CG (her lawyer friend referred to in para 83) met her was when she came to his house for supper in 2010 accompanied by Mr HS. He recalls at this event there was a little bit of friction between them when they were talking about emigrating and this made him feel uncomfortable.
92. A long standing friend ((ES) referred to in para 73) of Ms FC told of a spa weekend away with her in East Grinstead in January 2010. It was a lovely relaxing weekend. A few months later she received a phone call and did not recognise the phone number or the voice. The caller said it was Mr HS who she had met previously some years earlier. They made polite chit chat for a minute or two and then his tone changed and he said that he wanted to establish the circumstances leading up to them going away for the weekend – who was there, who paid for it etc. She felt uncomfortable with this line of questioning and ended the conversation. She felt that he was checking up on Ms FC and phoned her to inform her and to check she was okay. Ms FC was very apologetic. They talked about it later when they met and Ms FC kept apologising.
93. ES had a further phone call from Mr HS later that year a day after she had Sunday lunch with Ms FC and two other friends. On this occasion he was oozing praise saying “I don’t know what you said to Ms FC but you certainly cheered her up”. FT did not tell Ms FC about this telephone call.
94. SV (referred to earlier in para 72) told how in 2010 he had received a strange email purporting to come from Ms FC. The background to this email was that in 2009 SV’s wife jokingly made a comment to him that he would run off with Ms FC and have babies as she was younger. He told Ms FC about this in August 2009 and they laughed. On the 8th January 2010 he received an email from Ms FC’s email address. He noticed it had originally been sent to the wrong email address and then resent from HS’s email address. The email (purporting to be from Ms FC) said that she wanted to cut all relationships and communication with him and court action was threatened if he persisted. The email stated that SV had made inappropriate remarks and advances. Shocked by this email he

contacted Ms FC and she told him that Mr HS had hacked into her computer and sent the email. Mr HS continued to state at his trial that it was Ms FC's email and he had just forwarded it despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary.

95. In early 2010 a work colleague (BT) was walking down a corridor with Ms FC when she said that the most bizarre incident had happened – her ex-boyfriend proposed over the weekend. It was out of character for Ms FC to be so open and to say this sort of thing. BT asked her if she was happy with this and she said no it was very bizarre.
96. Her friend SO met Ms FC for lunch in a venue near her work place. They had a discussion about whether she should go to Australia where Mr HS was planning to work on a two year contract. He (HS) definitely wanted her to go but she was unsure whether to go with him. They talked about her job in London which she would have to give up and how, unlike Mr HS, she did not have a job to go to. They talked about how she would be so far away from all her friends and family. SO had gained the impression that she did not really want to go. By the end of this lunch she had resolved that she would not go to Australia.
97. In a conversation with her friend QM (who had helped her move out of Mr HS's flat in 2003 and who felt that the relationship was a taboo subject) she alluded that she felt trapped and still seemed embarrassed talking about her situation. She mentioned that Mr HS was thinking of going abroad and expressed huge relief and that she could have a life without him.
98. The emigration to Australia was set for April 2011 and plans were made for them both to go. Mr HS had put all his belongings in storage and rented out his flat in North London unfurnished. Ms FC's ticket had been booked and she had given him the money. Approximately 48 hours before departure she told him that she had doubts about going so far away from family and friends and she was not going to Australia. There was no evidence that Ms FC had ever intended to go to Australia. She had not made any arrangements about her flat if she had gone. Given her senior position in the Council she would be expected to give at least two months' notice of resignation but none was given. No one has mentioned to us that she planning any sort of farewell event. Friends speculated that this was an escape – with him gone she could get on with her life.
99. Mr HS did not want to be in Australia without her and returned to the UK four weeks later. His flat was rented out and his possessions were in storage. He took back tenure of his flat in October 2011 but there were problems with reclaiming his belongings from the storage company and a long dispute started which was not resolved until March 2013 (nearly two years later). He had nowhere to live and moved into Ms FC's studio flat. She rearranged her belongings to fit two of them into quite a small space and moved some of her possessions into storage.
100. JK was a former work colleague and friend who had first met Ms FC in 2006. They used to meet once a month for a drink and a general catch-up. In 2011 at one of their planned meetings she arrived with Mr HS who demonstrated what could be described as passive aggressive behaviour. Information made available at the trial showed that Mr HS was very jealous that JK had a good relationship with Ms FC to the extent that could be described as mild paranoia and that he had pressed her to take him to this meeting. This was the first time that JK had met him and he was taken aback by the level of control he was exerting on Ms FC. After a short time Mr HS brought this small social gathering to a close by

announcing that he had a meeting the next day and that he and Ms FC had to leave. She acquiesced without any resistance.

101. JK recalled being asked by Ms FC not to mention her or tag her on Facebook. She was very clear about this. He thought that this was because Mr HS was looking at any social media involving her and saw this as another example of his controlling of her.
102. Around this time some of her close friends, mindful of her yearning for children, begged her not to have children with Mr HS. "We were terrified that XXXX might get pregnant. This would allow Mr HS to exert more control over her life". They feared that if she had a child with him she would never be able to get away from him. Her reply was that she understood their concerns. Her expression was unhappy, very sombre.
103. There was a plan for them both to move into his flat when he regained his furniture from storage as it was bigger and he drew up a spreadsheet with 32 tasks to be completed to enable the relocation.
104. They moved into his flat on 18th September 2012 without his furniture etc. becoming available. He noticed among the belongings she brought with her some papers on internet dating. He had previously seen these a few months earlier and she claimed that she had downloaded them for her friend. Seeing that she still had these papers some months later and had taken them with her when moving sparked off a row. He maintained that the stress of battling to get his possessions back, the fact that the 18th September was the anniversary of his father's death and he had postponed visiting his grave on that day in order to complete the move and finding the online dating papers was too much. He claimed to be highly strung by all these factors and had an "emotional outburst". This outburst was too much for Ms FC and she returned to her flat after one day. They split up again and this lasted for a number of months.
105. Around this time in September 2012 Ms FC visited her stepbrother and at the end of the evening was driven back to the railway station by her sister in law, Mrs XS2, who was also a friend. Mrs XS2 was aware that they had split up and asked if she was okay and Ms FC replied along the following lines – "you know how we are talking calmly and things are normal. Well Mr HS would go from this to being in an extreme rage in the matter of a moment and would remain like that for some time". When asked what sort of reason was there for this change of mood Ms FC added – "well it could be because someone looked at him in a way he didn't like or someone slightly cut him off on the road, it could've been the slightest thing and he would want to get out and beat people up or fight." Her sister in law was surprised to hear about this side of Mr HS's personality because she (Ms FC) had previously always been very protective of him and did not want to put people off him. The sister in law felt that Ms FC admitted to something of this nature because she was sure that the relationship with him was over and no longer had to protect the image people had of him.
106. Although this split lasted several months (acknowledged by Mr HS) they were observed attending a Blackbyrds concert at the Council assembly hall attached to her workplace on 11th October 2012. The next day Mr HS telephoned the venue manager and said that Ms FC had always liked the venue and that he wanted to use it to show his commitment to her. He did not say it was a proposal but described it as a gesture. This sounded very romantic and as the venue was not booked the following week it was agreed he could use

it. The venue manager was not aware of the relationship history when Mr HS asked for her help to lure Ms FC into the venue on the pretence of a meeting. When Ms FC entered the venue it was empty except for Mr HS standing on the stage. The venue manager could observe what was happening via the cctv relay. Mr HS proceeded to read out a love declaration or poem and from Ms FC's body language she was not reacting in a positive way. He then walked down the steps to her and she turned and walked out. He spoke to the venue manager before leaving and told her that what he said was more of an apology than something about a commitment. Ms FC emailed the venue manager within minutes of leaving to apologise for putting her in the middle of their situation.

107. A number of senior staff (who were also friends) were in a management meeting with Ms FC that afternoon and she told that Mr HS had arranged the scenario in the assembly hall and how he had come on stage and read out a long poem. She said she was really embarrassed. He said something about sex. She could not believe what was happening. It was uncharacteristic for MS FC to talk about something like this. She was clearly concerned about him. One colleague asked if she was concerned about his mental health and she replied that she was and that he looked in a bad state. When asked how she was the next day she told her friend he had turned up at her flat. She seemed unsettled and did not let on that she was scared. Her friends at the meeting believe that the only reason she told them about the incident was to warn them in case he tried to contact any of them. They were amazed that he had done something like this as anyone who knew Ms FC would have realised that she would hate that sort of thing.
108. Shortly after this flowers were sent to the office for Ms FC with a card with just an "X" on it. They were clearly from Mr HS. They were lilies. They went straight into the waste bin. Ms FC hated lilies and people who knew her well would have been aware of this.
109. Ms FC telephoned JK (referred to in para 100) the day after the assembly room incident and told him that Mr HS had just turned up at her flat. He suggested contacting the police and getting a restraining order as he saw this as harassment. Ms FC said that she wouldn't as she was concerned as to the police attitude given that Mr HS was black and also about the things she would have to disclose in order to get an injunction. Again she took the view that she wanted to do things humanely without hurting or damaging him.
110. At the end of 2012 her friend CC had a discussion with her about internet dating and she was more receptive to the idea than she had earlier been. Previously she had said she was not in the right frame of mind to start a relationship.
111. In 2013 they appeared to be back together although the exact dates of when he was living in her flat are unclear. Most friends and family were of the impression that they were not together and the relationship was over.
112. Ms FC signed up to Blues Match which was an online dating website for Oxford and Cambridge graduates. She met LA on this site in March 2013. They chatted online for a short time and then after a few weeks she gave him her private email address and then she telephoned him. They were getting on well and decided to meet up in May 2013 at Kew Gardens and had lunch. They were both happy to begin a relationship which for various reasons was mainly conducted through communication by telephone, email, text and Skype. They spoke by telephone a great deal. They met up on a few other occasions and planned to spend two weeks in her mother's flat in Nice at the end of July.

113. On one occasion they met up at the London Eye (9th June 2013) and spent a pleasant afternoon in that area. The conversation got round to previous relations and it was at this meeting that she told him about her previous relationship with Mr HS which had ended. She took her time to articulate exactly what she wanted to say. She could not take any more of his negativity. He took everything even accidents very personally. Always wanted to blame others rather than take any responsibility himself. He was an angry man and all this wore her down. He had a big chip on his shoulder. She was quite clear that she was no longer in this relationship.
114. Ms FC started to feel ill and was coughing quite violently and had to go home. LA offered to take her home but she would not let him. He had offered to pick her up for one of their dates but she would not let him citing environmental reasons and using too much petrol. He did not know at the time that Mr HS was living in her flat and that concerns for his safety was the main reason she did want him anywhere near her flat. He found this out a few days later.
115. On 12th June 2013 they were having a Skype conversation late in the evening. As they were talking he heard a loud bang from inside her flat and Ms FC suddenly slammed the screen down after looking up to the side. The call terminated and the screen went dead and he did not hear anything else. He waited a while half expecting her to restart the conversation but nothing happened. He called her mobile and texted but she did not respond.
116. We know retrospectively that Mr HS came back earlier than expected and surprised her. She closed the laptop quickly to try and avoid him being aware that she was having a conversation with LA. He (Mr HS) claimed at his trial that she made the excuse that she had been looking at a porn site and did not want him to see what she had been looking at.
117. We now know that around this time Mr HS had been trawling the web for information on how to hack people's email but the exact date of these searches is unclear.
118. Because he (LA) had heard the loud bang he was very concerned and dialled the local police using 101. He did not want to dial 999 in case he was overreacting. The Metropolitan Police were very reassuring and told him that he had done the right thing. They said they would send someone round to check on her. Unfortunately Ms FC had never told him where she lived other than in South London and he could not give the police an address.
119. Ms FC contacted him later to say that everything was okay and that she would call him later. She sent him an email on Friday 14th June 2013 in which she told him for the first time about Mr HS staying at her flat. She was apologetic and said she wanted to be open with him. She explained that he had been staying at her flat on the sofa while his flat and some other issues were being sorted out. She made the point that it was not "friends with benefits" or anything like that meaning that she was simply helping him out and that it was not a sexual relationship. She added – "but it is uncomfortable and I am regretting making the decision to help him out in this way. Thankfully he should be leaving in a week or so. He is or can be quite unpredictable and has on a few occasions over the years since I have known him secretly found out the contact details of my friends and family and contacted them for a range of reasons – for example he called ES because he didn't believe I went to a weekend spa with her (she is not a fan of his, unsurprisingly).....I couldn't call you

because he can hear from anywhere in the flat and is curious/suspicious if he sees late texts or emails.....But just to confirm, I am not in a relationship with him..... to be honest I just can't wait to get the flat back to myself so that you can come and stay..."

120. Over the following days they continued to text and Skype and talk by telephone. She cautioned that when they were talking on Skype she might have to end the conversation abruptly if he came back. LA reflected that the fact that the relationship was over with him simply staying with her as a friend and she still had to tread carefully around him demonstrated how controlling he was.
121. On 22nd June 2013 Ms FC downloaded a document on how to end a controlling relationship.
122. Around this time (23rd June 2013), unbeknown to Ms FC, Mr HS searched her mobile phone and copied all the texts between her and LA to his mobile. This took place at least one week before her death. At the trial he argued that she must have sent the texts to him to make him jealous while at the same time stating that he was unaware of their relationship at this time. This also conflicted with his 'confession' that he killed Ms FC when he lost control after finding out that she was seeing someone else.
123. Mr HS often covertly recorded conversations using his computer and a memory stick. On Monday evening 24th June 2013 he recorded a two and a half hour conversation with Ms FC which the police found when they searched the flat. It was more of a controlling monologue than a two way discussion. He claimed at his trial that he was unaware that the recording had started and concluded that it must have started accidentally. Police analysis of his computer uncovered that he was indeed aware of the recording as he had logged on to his computer on Sunday 30th June 2013 and changed the name of the recording. The name of the recording had been changed three times in total with the second name change shown as "my last conversation with XXXX". The transcript of the recording showed that Mr HS pretended that he had just seen a text from someone named "L" on her phone and then berated and harangued her for hours about their relationship and what he saw as her betrayal.
124. He asked questions repeatedly but would rarely give her space to answer. He grabbed her phone to see the text exchange and she continually pleaded for him to give it back. He blamed her for him seeing the texts saying –"you made me take your phones". He put all the blame for the problems with the relationship on her. Everything that had gone wrong was her fault. The conversation seemed like an attempt to mentally wear her down into submission. The recording was played in court.
125. The recording showed that he still believed they were in a full relationship and she did not say anything to contradict this.
126. LA and Ms FC had arranged to meet on Tuesday 25th June 2013 but he received a text message from her about 8am which went along the lines of "I am sorry HS found your texts, been up all night talking. I am going to bed now". He then received an email from her on Wednesday 26th June 2013 at 11.47am that said that Mr HS had taken her phones and computer and that she could not make contact.
127. Mr HS gave her back her old work Blackberry which she told LA was because it was on its

last legs and cut out after a few minutes of usage. She got a new battery which seemed to cure all the problems with the phone. LA advised her to remove the new battery each time she went home so that he (Mr HS) did not realise the phone was working properly otherwise he would confiscate that one again.

128. On Thursday 27th June 2013 Ms FC telephoned LA as she left work at 6.48pm and this conversation continued until she reached home. It was a long and serious conversation. She told him that she had a three stage action plan to encourage Mr HS out of her flat and make him realise it was over. The first stage was dialogue – try and make him want to go and to realise that their relationship was over but with him believing it was his decision. She was very concerned with Mr HS losing his pride and dignity so she wanted him to think it was his idea to move out and to know that the relationship was over. If this did not work she was going to offer him an ultimatum. This would be to give him a date and arrange a removal van for him and all of his belongings. The final stage was to involve the police but she did not want to do this as she believed that he would then have a police record and she wanted to avoid future prejudices as Mr HS is black and she believed it might affect his future employment prospects. This was the reasoning behind her three point plan.
129. During this conversation she made two further significant points which worried and concerned LA. She mentioned that Mr HS had found a photograph of her looking happy. She said that Mr HS had been upset because she looked happy – that he had almost taken offence at it. The second point of concern was that Ms FC would not arrange another date as she was sure that Mr HS would follow her if she went out.
130. They also spoke about the future for both of them and the new life they were planning. It took her one hour and fifty three minutes to arrive home partly because she wanted to extend the conversation and partly because she was putting off arriving at her destination because of what awaited her there.
131. LA reflected a great deal on what Ms FC had discussed with him over the last week and discussed the situation with his mother and sister who expressed concerns about domestic violence. He sent Ms FC an email on Friday 28th June at 4.51pm advising her to walk away if there was any hint of threat. He received a very short response at 10.16pm which simply said “Got to be really quick, am OK”.
132. LA’s final contact with Ms FC was via a text on Saturday 29th June 2013 at 11.21am saying – “Hello, am fine pls don’t worry will try to call this afternoon hope you feel much better thank you so much for your wonderful support need to be quick XXXX”.
133. On Saturday 29th June 2013, Ms FC met her mother for lunch in South London around midday and they spent a few hours together. Ms FC was clearly very bubbly and happy and spoke a great deal about LA. Her mother had not met LA at this stage. As Ms FC and LA planned to stay at her mother’s flat in France she gave her daughter the keys. She was very happy and open about the relationship with LA and told how they planned to move in together. She did not mention Mr HS at all on that occasion. Her mother was unaware that he was staying at her flat and understood that the relationship had ended some time ago. Sometime between 3 and 4pm they said their goodbyes and each went their respective ways. This was the last recorded contact that anyone had with Ms FC before she was brutally murdered by Mr HS.

134. Ms FC was murdered sometime between 29th June and 1st July. We know she died sometime between her last contact with her mother on the Saturday (29th) afternoon and the call to police on the morning of Monday 1st. She was brutally and repeatedly stabbed 26 times
135. Mr HS pleaded guilty to manslaughter with diminished responsibility but this plea was not accepted and he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. The judge accepted that the murder was not premeditated otherwise the sentence would have been for 25 years.
136. Mr HS's case rested on the contention that he lost his self-control and snapped when he found out about the new man in the life of Ms FC and that her relationship with him was over. The prosecution's case was that this was just an overblown description of circumstances which may have been difficult for him but were no more than many people have to contend with. They presented a case that this was no more than a possessive and controlling man losing his temper when confronted with an unpalatable reality that she had finally found the words to tell him it was over.
137. The police were able to unravel some important facts about this weekend which undermined the facts put forward by the defendant that he had acted on impulse after learning about LA. He told police he had produced a five page document setting out his relationship with Ms FC and it ended with the following paragraph – "She stressed there was no one else involved and was only about us. But soon I found her phone with text from a 'LA'. She was not telling the truth. I asked who was 'LA'. She turned cold all of a sudden and said it is none of my business as we were over. I lost it. I grabbed the Swiss Army knife and stabbed her." The evidence uncovered by the police showed that he had copied her texts messages at least seven days beforehand and additionally the content from the covert recording revealed that he was aware of the new relationship from that date.
138. His document – My life with XXXX ... was referred to in court as "an essentially false account of what had happened" and also as "an attempt to rewrite history".
139. The document was supposed to be a confession setting out the background to what he had done but the evidence from his computer showed that he had started drafting this document up to a week before the murder. Analysis of the computer showed that the document went through approximately 28 different versions as he polished it. He renamed it, corrected spelling, and used the thesaurus to find better more appropriate words. One version, subsequently changed, started – "I write this with a heavy heart."
140. He finished the document with the words – "My devoted love for her, combined with the pain of betrayal made me do something I thought was never in me and will regret for the rest of my life and beyond. I wanted her to see that love can mean sacrifice (not selfishness) and to love and be loved is everything."
141. The police were able to fill in some of the gaps between the murder and him notifying them which contradicted his story that he suffered from diminished responsibility and an impaired ability to understand what he was doing and that he telephoned the police when he had realised what he had done. The timeline of activity after the murder illustrated the actions of a very clear headed man who was putting his house in order.

142. He attempted to clean up the murder scene and washed the walls and floor but forensics were still able to clearly establish the blood trail. He put various items including her clothing in black bin bags and put them out for the rubbish collection (the rubbish collection had already taken place and the bin bags were still in place when the police arrived). He undressed Ms FC and put her body in the bath and washed it. He said that it seemed the right thing to do – “I was on autopilot.”
143. He polished his confession – “My life with XXXX, a woman of many faces” and downloaded an Oscar Wilde poem, ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’, which includes the verse: ‘Yet each man kills the thing he loves... The coward does it with a kiss, the brave man with the sword’.
144. The police told at his trial how he seemed to be putting his house in order. Among other things he did before calling the police included researching online about how to write a will. He paid cheques, wrote letters. He went to the nearby ATM at the local supermarket and withdrew £160 in cash.
145. He contacted his sister by text asking for her bank details and full postal address and she replied as requested. She checked her phone at 7am on Monday 1st July and there was a further text that he had sent £500 to her bank account. There was also a message that he would need her help soon. She tried a number of times to call him but could not get through. She texted him to ask what was going on as she was worried sick and he replied that he was driving and would ring her back. She texted him repeatedly asking for a response and added that she would be discreet about whatever he told her.
146. He eventually telephoned her and told her to get a pen and paper. He said he was terminally ill and did not have long to live. After a while he started to give her various items of information. He was calm and spoke in a normal voice. During this short conversation his sister recalls him saying “only God will be my creator” It is difficult to understand what he meant by this and we can speculate that it was misheard and may have been - only God will be my judge. He sent her an email with the title – “XXXX, a woman of two faces”. At the end of the email he had written “I have stabbed her”.
147. She hurriedly drove to Ms FC’s flat to try and see him but by the time she got there the police had already arrived in response to his 999 call.

Issues arising from the Narrative

148. One of the recurring questions that kept arising from the panel’s review of the narrative was why could Ms FC not walk away from this relationship? She was a very intelligent highly educated confident young assertive woman. She was not passive or submissive; she was a feminist with strong views. She had good analytical skills and did not have “rose coloured glasses” when it came to Mr HS. She knew what he was like and compartmentalised her life to localise his actions within the home and to avoid the involvement of third parties in the negativities of their relationship. Our conclusion was that she was a victim and no different in this respect from all the other women from all strata of society who suffer domestic abuse and are unable to escape from an abuser for a multiplicity of complex reasons.
149. Ms FC did not fit the stereotype of an abused victim and to some extent this seemed to

confuse how others viewed her relationship. Perceptions tend to be biased by domestic violence myths, perpetuated both by the media and by society in general which tend to paint a stereotypical picture of what sort of person gets abused – conjuring an image of a ‘battered wife’. This particular case reinforces the fact that domestic abuse is not exclusive to a particular socio-economic group, nor is it the preserve of a particular postcode, race or sexual orientation. It knows no boundary, occurring just as often behind net curtains, in affluent areas and among the professional classes, as anywhere else. Victims in all strata of society can experience their self-confidence deteriorating making escape unattainable and being controlled becoming normality.

150. Later in this review it will be explained that at the trial Mr HS was described as having a number of negative personality traits and how (in his own mind) he underwent a process of transference where he attributed these traits to Ms FC. They were hers not his. One of his negative traits was a lack of empathy and this was a trait he constantly accused Ms FC of having in the covert recording. Ironically it was because she was the direct opposite, a very kind, empathetic, caring and compassionate person, that she stayed in this relationship too long.
151. She cared for Mr HS as a friend and did not want anything bad to happen to him. On a number of occasions we heard that she was reluctant to involve the police because she did not want to be the reason for him obtaining a police record. She was worried about what might happen to him as a black man if he was found to be harassing a white woman. She also did not want to hurt him. She wanted to let him down gently. She was concerned not to hurt his feelings or damage his self-esteem.
152. The judge in his summing up said “one thing that was spoken by a number of witnesses was that she was someone who seemed to have great difficulty in ending her relationship with the defendant, finding it difficult to find a sensitive and kindly way of doing it.how he had a temper and she felt intimidated by him and how she wanted to be sensitive, as sensitive as she could, by breaking the relationship without hurting his feelings.....she was trying to find a way of ending the relationship in a way that preserved his pride.”
153. LA told how when she drew up her action plan “to encourage Mr HS out of her flat and make him realise it was over”. The interesting use of the word “encourage” reflects her sensitive approach. LA said “XXXX was very concerned with Mr HS losing his pride and dignity”. LA, in turn was very understanding and displayed many of the same characteristics as her in terms of empathy and the need for sensitivity and accepted that she wanted to do this break her way while advising her to walk away at any sign of threat.
154. We know that she expressed concern about his mental health. She did not express fears about physical violence but about his non-violent aggression and behaviour. She was frightened and intimidated by him and concerned about what he would do when angry if he knew aspects of her life even when they were entirely innocent. She was particularly concerned about how he would react to friends and colleagues when angry.
155. The covert recording and his haranguing of her for hours and her quiet almost inaudible comments clearly demonstrated the difficulties she faced in trying to have a serious discussion about their relationship.

156. We know from others that he undermined her self-esteem and cast doubts in her mind about her ability to form relationships and that he believed he was the only one who really understood her.
157. Throughout this report there is a recurring theme of Ms FC being very private about the nature of her relationship with Mr HS. We saw this as her way of coping with the situation she found herself in. To live with domestic violence can be extremely emotionally demanding and draining and many women cope with the strain by developing coping strategies. Keeping her problems and concerns to herself was her way of keeping this problematic relationship self-contained and partially controlled by excluding others.
158. She closed off many avenues of support and advice by keeping her own counsel on the problems she was having and rarely mentioning them to friends. She closed down conversations when it arose and gave friends the impression that this was a taboo subject. In addition she always presented a positive face to her family and they were unaware of the turmoil she was facing at times. Some friends felt that she was somewhat embarrassed that she, a very capable and confident woman, was in this position. They speculated that the subject of Mr HS rarely arose because she knew without any doubt what they would advise and it would be to walk away which was the very option that she felt unable to do.
159. Some friends also felt that Ms FC may have been of the opinion that this was a problem that she could manage and indicated as much to them. One friend described this as “I think Ms FC felt the need to nurture him. I think she saw Mr HS as some sort of project”. Another friend commented – “XXXX was always the kind of person, and I would say this to her about Mr HS, that she wanted to mend birds with broken wings, I always said this could not always be possible. This was just the sort of person XXXX was she had unlimited time to assist people with their problems”. One friend recalled thinking at the time that Ms FC was in a state of denial about the relationship.
160. In 2013 she started to use Blues Match, the internet dating website, as she finally had decided that she wanted a normal relationship. She found someone of like mind that she wanted to be with and to have a normal life and this was the turning point. Her new relationship in which she was so happy gave her the strength to finally make the break with Mr HS. In LA she had found someone who she was quickly attracted to and slowly over time she confided in him. To be able to talk openly about her problem relationship was a great relief. She sought advice online on how to end a controlling relationship. She managed to gather the strength to make the sensitive three point plan to extricate Mr HS from her life.

Former relationship of Mr HS

161. We have included details below of a previous abusive relationship that the perpetrator was in because a history of abuse is a prime indicator that it will happen again.
162. Mr HS had been in another unsatisfactory relationship before he met Ms FC which resulted in marriage followed by separation one year later. His former wife was reluctant to testify and did not want to be involved and to raise issues that had long been laid to rest but was persuaded to do so because she knew it was the right and responsible thing to do. She did not want her details to be released and requested no contact. We respected this desire

not to be involved and have only reported events here that were referred to in open court. We felt it was important to include details of this failed relationship as it demonstrated that the abuse of Ms FC was not the first time that he had abused a female partner. In this context Mr HS was a repeat abuse perpetrator.

163. The relationship was difficult and was described as volatile and tempestuous. It lasted six years and ended in a marriage that almost immediately failed. We heard that he was a controlling man who was prone to outbursts of ill temper, lacking in emotional intelligence with fixed points of view. He was volatile and prone to arguing, something she dealt with by shutting herself away in the bedroom with the door locked. He broke the door down on one occasion when she refused to open it. He never physically assaulted her during the relationship. She described how his short temper meant it was like “living with a giant toddler at times in terms of temper tantrums”. He controlled her financially. He found it difficult to grasp that the relationship was a partnership. Friends did not come to the wedding because they did not agree that she should marry him.
164. In terms of why she married him, she stated that she did not have the strength of character at the time to pull out. One morning she decided that this was not how she wanted her life to be. She developed an escape plan because she knew he was possessive and would never agree to end the relationship. She got him to agree to a month apart to refocus and reinvigorate their relationship but she knew that once she had left she was never coming back.
165. He made contact persistently at her work which created all sorts of problems for her. Her work and health suffered. He would contact her friends and hassle them and would turn up at places he knew she was going to. Because of his behaviour she was forced to resign from her job. She met a new partner and left London as the behaviour of Mr HS had become so irrational that she feared he would harm her or her new partner.
166. She told him that he needed counselling. His work eventually referred him for counselling as he was not coping with the breakup. The divorce took 3 years to finalise as she wanted to let everything quieten down and to avoid contact with him. On the day before the divorce was finalised he contacted her completely unexpectedly and suggested that they try again to make a go of it. She felt he needed professional help as this behaviour was so bizarre.
167. There was one incident of physical violence but this was when the relationship had ended. She went back to the flat to collect an electronic organiser. He had accessed this and had contacted friends etc. to gather information on what she was doing and where she was going and searched for the names of other men. He grabbed her by the throat and held her down on the bed with his hand over her throat. He could not take rejection. She remained passive and he eventually let her go. She did not report this to the police and she just want to get away and live a normal life.
168. This relationship demonstrates that he had a background of controlling and coercive behaviour.

Family and friends

169. A domestic homicide of this nature can take a terrible toll on family members and friends

and they can often feel side-lined and ill informed. With this in mind the DHR panel sought to make every effort to ensure that the needs of family and friends were at the forefront of our deliberations and sensitively handled.

170. We sought to ensure that family and friends were given every opportunity to be fully involved in this review and felt able to make a positive contribution. We were fully aware that family and friends could critically inform the review and provide insight into how Ms FC and Mr HS saw their choices and fill in information gaps about the effectiveness or appropriateness of services or lack of them.
171. Given the lack of involvement of statutory or voluntary agencies, the input from family and friends was invaluable and without it this review would never really have got off the ground. Going back over the details of their knowledge about Ms FC and the perpetrator, Mr HS, was a very painful and difficult experience and we are very grateful for their contribution. Some friends did not want to participate as they did not want to relive painful memories.
172. Given the sensitivity of this terrible event we gained our information where possible from statements given by the family to the police rather than putting them in the position of reopening recent and highly sensitive wounds. Where necessary we made requests for further information when clarification or additional clarity was needed. The family were very open and helpful.
173. Ms FC was very fortunate to be part of a very loving and caring family who were very fond of her but unfortunately she did not confide in them as much as she could have. Keeping her own counsel, as mentioned previously, was a consistent part of her coping mechanism. She wanted them to maintain a positive image of Mr HS and kept the negative aspects of their relationship from the family. She did not want people to think badly about him and was protective of him. They in turn were incredibly loyal and supportive of her and welcomed her partner into their lives without reservation. They were always welcoming, friendly and hospitable towards him which is what she would have wanted. They respected the great strides he had taken to improve his position and education given that he had grown up in a dysfunctional family with many serious problems.
174. This report focusses on the negativities of this relationship but following discussions with the family it should be acknowledged that there were also many positive aspects during the period they were together.
175. She kept the negative aspects of her relationship with Mr HS from her family until she opened up to her sister in law (Mrs XS2) in late 2012 during a lift to the station and told her of the negative side to his personality and his explosive temper. Because this was the only time that Ms FC had admitted to something which was difficult for her to admit or disclose, Mrs XS2 said "I felt in my heart it was the end of this relationship, she was no longer protecting things she knew family and friends would find difficult".
176. She knew her friends did not like him and would have known that her family would think likewise if they had any insight into what he was really like and the torment he was subjecting her to. She knew she had a relationship problem but it was one that she felt she could manage to a satisfactory conclusion.

177. In this case the family network was quite small and the opportunities to engage with them and to obtain relevant information to inform the review were quite limited. We therefore relied heavily on the input from friends and acquaintances. Ms FC had a number of long lasting friendships with people who held her in high esteem. Only a small number of them had ever met Mr HS or had heard her ever talk about him and their insight was invaluable. It appeared to us that she kept him compartmentalised because she knew what he was like. None of them liked him and none thought he was right for her and this is perhaps why she regularly kept her problems with the relationship to herself. On a number of occasions her guarded approach slipped when with friends and recollection of these periods of openness helped us greatly in understanding this complicated relationship.
178. Her family with their professional medical and therapeutic background helped us to grasp some of the subtleties of the psychiatric evidence presented during the trial which we did not have access to.
179. Ms FC was very fortunate to work in a very caring work environment with colleagues who doubled up as friends. It was clear from our discussions with them that they cared for her very much and valued her friendship. It seemed an exceptionally close workplace. They perhaps knew more about her relationship with Mr HS in the last four or five years than anyone else. They shared with her their negative views about him which she seemed to accept without argument but avoided or cut short any protracted discussion on this subject.
180. She started a new relationship with LA in March 2013 and quickly started to plan a future together. In the last months of her life he became a confidant and shared her anxieties and worries. But even he did not have the full picture because despite talking of her ex-boyfriend she kept from him that she had still not been able to break free from the relationship with Mr HS. LA provided us with a valuable open and honest insight into the last few months of her life which we gratefully appreciated as it was a painful experience for him.
181. We invited the family of the perpetrator to contribute to this review but they were reluctant to do so without the approval of Mr HS.
182. When drawing on all the information from family and friends we were aware that some of the recollections could have been influenced by hindsight and knowledge of this terrible tragedy.

The Relationship between Ms FC and Mr HS

183. This homicide differs significantly from others that are referred for a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) because there were no external agencies, other than the police, involved. There were no external interventions to draw on and learn from and generally very little official information available to facilitate the making of recommendations for future practice or to identify what lessons need to be learned. We felt that it was important to understand this relationship in some detail in order to make constructive observations as to how tragedies like this could be avoided or be less likely to happen in the future.
184. It is explained below that during the trial the defence psychiatrist set out a cluster of personality traits as an explanation for the actions of Mr HS and it is important to note that

while contending it was a recognised medical condition, she could not give it a name. The Judge gave a ruling that the defence of diminished responsibility was not available to Mr HS. The reason for this ruling was that there was “no evidence capable of demonstrating that any abnormality of mental functioning which the defendant may have been suffering from, if there was any at all, which arose from a recognised medical condition”.

185. This relationship was often referred to throughout the trial as an on/off relationship but this description is too understated and does not convey how strained and turbulent it often was. It was accepted that there were good and bad times and the defence used holidays, photographs, letters etc. to demonstrate the caring and intimate side of the couple but we have no way of knowing the percentage split between the good and the bad times. We do know however that within the first two years she was frightened of him and wanted out of it. She was so frightened of him that she could not face telling him and enlisted the help of a friend to do what can only be described as “escape”. It is against the background of that early traumatic event that we view the next ten years of their relationship.
186. Mr HS referred throughout his defence to how Ms FC had concealed activities, events and friends from him and when he found out about them later he became suspicious. From our perspective we reached the conclusion that Ms FC did compartmentalise her life particularly where it involved him. The narrative above sets out how she thought that he was paranoid and felt hard done by. She described this as him having a massive chip on his shoulder. His ultra-sensitivity and explosive temper did not make him very genial company. He was extremely jealous and possessive and did not want to share her with others particularly male friends. She was aware that he tried at times to isolate her from her friends. Her mother reflected that this attempted isolation extended to meeting the family “he was very controlling of XXXX’s access to us and her family. plans changed at the last minute if they were to come and stay”. When all these factors are considered it is understandable that she concealed what she was doing and who she was seeing. This however was a vicious circle as the more she concealed the more paranoid he became giving her even more reasons to conceal even mundane day to day events.
187. The psychiatrist acting for the defence at the trial identified a cluster of Mr HS’s significant personality traits that help put his actions and behaviour in this relationship (as set out in the above narrative) into perspective. We were not given access to the psychiatric report but managed to piece together aspects of it from the court hearing. We heard that he has a narcissistic character which is characterised by exaggerated feelings of self-importance, a sense of entitlement and demonstrated grandiosity in his beliefs and behaviour. He had a strong need for admiration, but lacks the ability to empathise with the feelings or desires of others. He was also possessive.
188. The judge in his summing up referred to Mr HS’s sense of entitlement particularly in respect of Ms FC. People diagnosed with this personality trait generally have an unreasonable expectation of especially favourable treatment or automatic compliance with their expectations. For example he tried to control and determine how she saw and accepted their relationship because he understood it better than she did. The prosecution, for example, described the covert recording as “you telling her what she really thinks or really ought to think and you not listening to what she says”. The judge in his sentencing remarked how he had dominated her and had a need to control her.

189. Ms FC herself was aware of the warning signs of his possessive character trait as she had referred to him trying to control every aspect of her life. Possessive relationships often involve manipulation whereby the partner can feel worthless and incapable of finding another relationship by damaging their self-esteem and a possessive person often expresses jealousy. Manifesting itself as becoming angry or upset when their partner socialises with friends, family or co-workers often followed by accusations of cheating or being suspicious of innocent behaviour such as sending an email or a text message. In extreme cases, a possessive partner may try to cut off the contact with friends and family because he is jealous of the time spent with them. Also abusers may attempt to isolate the victim by severing the victim's ties to outside support and resources. These are all behaviours that Mr HS exhibited to varying degrees during the course of this relationship and documented in the above narrative. The judge put this succinctly when he said – “I am quite sure that in a very real sense you regarded her as not just in your control but as being almost in your ownership”.
190. In the covert recording and in his document (My life with XXXX) he attempts to transfer many of his personality traits to Ms FC and to portray her as the person with the psychological problems. At the same time he tried to present himself as the patient and caring partner who was the only one who understood her and gave her much needed support. He went as far as diagnosing her as having NPD – Narcissistic Personality Disorder, a disorder which contains the very behavioural traits he was suffering from. Perversely, he also attributed control issues to her.
191. He emotionally dominated her and seemed to further exert his control by adopting the role of her therapist, as the only one who really understood her and therefore the only one who could help her. He was quick to point out what he saw as her weaknesses and flaws such as lack of empathy. He attributed her concealment of things from him as “She would compartmentalise her life as a ‘good person’ when other parts of her life were exposing her as a ‘bad wicked’ person. These traits stemmed from her childhood”.
192. In his self-acquired role as a therapist during the covert recording he talks of her trying to give everyone a good impression of her but that he is the one person who is also aware of what he calls her ‘bad attributes’. This extract from his covert recording although rambling conveys how he sought to undermine her self-esteem.

“to know that I know you have these bad attributes is one thing, but for you to know that I know them still makes you feel bad that they’re revealed to me, so when I get these issues, you, you see me as a bad person in those bad things about you. I don’t make you feel good because you know that I know there are certain things in you that you don’t like about yourself, so you want to reinforce the sense of you not being that bad person that you are or having these bad traits by revealing yourself to people who don’t know about your other side, who don’t see that element, they don’t see you 24/7, so the recognition there for you to make yourself feel... Perhaps what you’re saying is I want to be normal and I want these people to see me and then treat me as you feel is normal without these bad things, so with these bad things you consider yourself perhaps un-normal in some respects, as I made very crude distinctions but if I can display people these things without these other things, they’ll just see me as normal, and treat me as a wonderful person, which in some ways is creating a kind of fictional, fictional (stutters) environment because you want to get a reinforcement that you are normal, you’re trying to reinforce all the time that you’re a normal person, but here’s the person standing in

front of you saying well look I've seen you, I've seen you in many different guises, many different ways, many different expressions and emotions and I still see is normal, and you're not believing that because you don't believe in yourself but there you are normal, so when I say I'm normal you're kind of dumbfounded, thinking who is this person, I don't understand again, how can you say that I'm normal or right or correct?"

193. He misread the continuing nature of his relationship with Ms FC. He recognised the breakups during their relationship but had an idealised view of it having an inherent stability. Despite the separations he felt that they were drawn back together on 'part need and part want'. He felt that they had been through so many issues over the years together that they became closer to each other each time and the relationship was stronger as a result.
194. In 2012 when most of her friends and family thought the relationship was over he took the direct opposite view – "I had come to know her so well she would concede at times I was uncannily right on a number of the issues we had discussed in the past and meant I was the right person for her. I had by this time invested so much love and attention to her needs it would still at times overwhelm her". In the narrative section of this report we set out the Assembly Hall incident which went so disastrous wrong ending with Ms FC angry and embarrassed. He saw this differently and admitted that although she was mortified – "things came together again. She was impressed by what I had done. No one had ever gone out of their way to express how much they loved her in this way and that got us back together".
195. Ms FC started a new relationship with LA in March 2013 and very quickly they both knew that they wanted to be together long term. We contrasted this stage of her life with the previous period when she was with Mr HS. Her friends remarked on her transformation. She was happy and bubbly and spoke a great deal about LA and volunteered information about them. Her work colleagues told of her receiving flowers in the office from LA and how she was delighted. "She was beaming". They remarked on this because they recalled her reaction when she received flowers from Mr HS which she described as unwelcome, and did not like him involving work in their relationship but also they were a bunch of lilies which she disliked – they were thrown in the bin. Among the mixed bunch from LA were a few of the hated lilies but she just smiled and said coyly that she would have to educate him on what flowers she liked.
196. Throughout this report we have remarked how Ms FC was very private and this was why she did not disclose much information about her relationship with Mr HS. When she met LA she was transformed and the reticence to discuss relationship seems to have been abandoned. SV remarked – "XXXX told me she had a new boyfriend and told me she was happy..... She told me she had found someone normal... this time she felt things were normal for her and it was just right.....she was happier than ever I had known her". CC recalled Ms FC coming to her flat on 18th June 2013 "she was really happy and different. She said she had met LA and she was quite garrulous about this which was unusual for her. I asked her whether this one was normal and she replied she could build a relationship with him. She was very happy and like a 'little kid with a new toy'". She told CO that she had found the perfect guy. This transformation and willingness to tell people of her new relationship indicated to us that the general perception of Ms FC as a private person while accurate was highly influenced by not wanting to discuss the embarrassing and sensitive subject of Mr HS.

197. This was a difficult relationship to understand but without doubt it was a controlling relationship which Ms FC wanted increasingly to extricate herself from. It was clearly domestic abuse where she was subjected to emotional and psychological abuse and at times also financial abuse. Mr HS, as the abuser, continued to see the relationship through his own highly tainted “rose coloured glasses”. The fact that she was too frightened to stand up to him and express her misgivings and desire to leave it most probably helped him maintain his illusions.
198. We mentioned coping mechanisms earlier in this report and it appeared to us that not actively pursuing a path of resistance and retaliation (likely to trigger violence against her) was a coping strategy for keeping safe because she knew there would be consequences.

Individual Management Reviews (IMR)

199. IMRs and written responses were received from the list of agencies and bodies below and have been summarised for the purpose of this report.

Metropolitan Police
Victim Support Wandsworth

IMR – Metropolitan Police Service

200. The IMR from the Metropolitan Police Service was compiled by the Critical Incident Advisory Team SC&O 21(2) of the Specialist Crime and Operations section. Much of the factual content of the IMR relating to the arrest has already been used in this report and there is nothing to be gained by repeating it.
201. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) completed a brief summary of involvement with both the victim and the perpetrator both within their relationship and as individuals from 1st January 2007 to 1st July 2013 as required under the DHR’s terms of reference (TOR). Research for the summary of involvement was carried out on their own and national databases.
202. Mr HS had had one conviction on his PNC (Police National Computer) record dated January 2004 for Violence to Secure Entry – Criminal Damage (to front door) for which he received a caution.
203. Another incident involving Mr HS as a witness was also recorded on his record. In April 2004, Mr HS saw a male victim being assaulted, chased after the female suspect and detained her until the arrival of police.
204. Ms FC is described as a White European and Mr HS as a British Black African. There was no information or inference in police records to indicate that any incident mentioned in this report was motivated or aggravated by ethnicity, faith, sexual orientation, gender, linguistic or other diversity factors. Where there was contact with the police there appears to be nothing to suggest that any diversity factors were relevant in the decision making or how they were treated.
205. Intelligence searches on the MPS PNC for Mr HS and Ms FC from January 2000 revealed one previous domestic report for the couple. On 29th March 2009 she telephoned the

police as he had made a number of calls and emails to her which had frightened her. He had not made any threats to physically harm her. She wanted police to be aware but did not want any action taken and did not want him contacted by them and would not reveal his mobile telephone number. The main details of this were set out in the narrative above. The police however did follow this up and made a number of attempts to talk to her over the next few days to ensure that she was safe and not in any form of danger. They ensured that she called into a local police station so that they could go over things with her face to face and make sure that she was reaching her decision without fear or duress. This requirement for officers 'to attend and speak to her' may have been prompted by knowledge of Mr HS's criminal damage caution.

206. As demonstrated in this case, domestic violence was taken seriously by the MPS. A secondary investigation was invoked and a full risk assessment undertaken. The police operate a positive action policy that entails where possible arresting the perpetrator without being reliant on the wishes of the victim. Previous reports and intelligence checks were carried out on both him and her and the result was recorded as 'no trace' which is of concern given the criminal damage caution which we know was on his PNC record. We do not know whether the investigating officer was aware of this offence when he graded the risk as 'standard'. The crime was confirmed as a substantive offence of Telecommunications as the circumstances were such that an offence had occurred rather than the matter being a 'Non Crime Domestic'.
207. The Investigating Officer contacted Ms FC and she reiterated that the problem had been resolved and did not want any further action. Mr HS had apologised, the messages had stopped and she had heard no more from him since he was aware she had involved the police. It is not recorded if Ms FC had been referred to any local Domestic Violence support service or whether she was given information or advice detailing what options were available to her in relation to her domestic situation with Mr HS.
208. The MPS IMR drew our attention to research that estimated that most domestic violence victims, and in particular women, experience on average 35 incidents of domestic violence before they first contact police. They add, for that reason, at every contact with a DV victim and in particular the first, it is important that police provide victims with information of what possible choice they have available to escape their domestic violence situation, and record that this action has taken place. Similarly, they could be referred to a local domestic violence support network with a note made on the DETS that this referral has been made. Without this information having been recorded on the DETS, they cannot say for certain whether Ms FC was made aware of the support available to her, where she could access this support and what options she had available to assist her domestic situation should it reoccur in the future.
209. The MPS IMR contained the following recommendation.
- Recommendation 1: MPS Service Level Recommendation - Recording Advice on CRIS**
- It is recommended that the MPS ensures that every domestic victim is provided with details of their local domestic violence support agencies and given information of options available and to record on the CRIS that this information was given. Further to record on the CRIS which support agency the victim has been referred to. This is to enable victims to make informed choices regarding their domestic situation.

210. The DHR panel were encouraged to see the efforts made by the MPS officers to make direct contact with Ms FC and to ensure that her decision not to proceed with this complaint was a reasoned choice on her behalf. We note this as an example of good practice.

IMR - Victim Support Wandsworth

211. Victim Support South West London submitted an IMR (Individual Management Review) on the relationship between Ms FC and Mr HS. In order to identify any agency involvement they carried out a search of Victim Support's Case Management System and archive system for London and nationwide and no record of any communication or referral can be found for either Ms FC or Mr HS.

212. Searches were carried out of the Victim Support's current Case Management System introduced in September 2013; this search looks for relevant cases recorded throughout England and Wales. This system holds all cases for Victim Support in London for clients that have either been referred via automated data transfer from the Metropolitan Police, City of London Police or British Transport Police, self-referrals and referrals to them by other agencies. A second search was carried out on their archive Case Management System which holds data dating back to 2008; again the search was conducted to include all data for Victim Support across England and Wales.

213. A search was carried out using combinations of the victim's name. No identical matches were found with the date-of-birth or for the addresses given for the victim or perpetrator. A search was also carried out for the perpetrator Mr HS using date of birth and addresses.

214. In terms of involvement it would appear that Victim Support had no knowledge of this victim prior to her murder or the perpetrator in this case. No records were found.

215. Victim Support responded to a number of questions asked by the DHR chairman as set out below.

216. Q How would Ms FC, (or a person in FC's circumstances: i.e. professional, well educated person), know where to go to seek help about domestic abuse?

217. A Victim Support works to raise its profile in the media, including social media and we have an advertised Victim Supportline. Locally we have a high street location in Battersea and an article on our opening was published in the Wandsworth Guardian. Victim Support takes part in community events and has had stalls advertising all our services at Waitrose and Asda, and in local libraries. The domestic violence project in Wandsworth, Wandsworth Safety Net also run a series of drop-in centres specifically for DV victims seeking support.

218. Q Does the GP know what to do if domestic abuses are identified?

A Victim Support's Wandsworth Safety Net Project has been working to try and raise awareness of domestic abuse through local GPs. This has included circulating information to Locality Managers and GP practises on the borough. Carried out 3

presentations to 2 locality forums and one to GPs Lead Meeting. Referral forms and information about the service has been disseminated via the locality Managers. It has proved difficult to carry our precise training with GPs directly due to workload and plans are being made to target other practise staff with this training to raise awareness. To date the service has received 6 direct referral from local GPs.

219. Q What is being done to build the knowledge of domestic abuse in people?

A Victim Support's WSN project in conjunction with partners has worked to raise awareness of domestic abuse on the borough. Drop in centres are available in a number of locations within the borough. Other initiatives have included presentations to different churches and faith groups. Partnership work with Children's and Adult Services, Police and WBC Community Safety Units, Housing, Children Centres, family solicitors, drug and alcohol centres, learning difficulties team at Springfield Hospital, St Georges A&E and Midwifery, and other local support agencies. In addition the DV Project Manager works closely with WBC Domestic & Sexual Violence Coordinator to identify gaps in the Borough, to raise the profile of domestic violence, sexual violence and FGM in Wandsworth.

220. Victim Support submitted a number of recommendation and these have been set out below based on the observation that Ms FC had no interaction with any statutory or support service regarding the domestic abuse she had suffered prior to her tragic murder. They address their recommendations on the perception of Ms FC as an educated professional woman and that any learning from her death should be focused on how Victim Support target this particular geodemographic to raise awareness of both what Victim Support can do to offer support and to highlight what domestic abuse is. In this particular case, to draw any conclusion, they have assumed that Ms FC did not acknowledge or appreciate she was a victim of DV and based their recommendations on that assumption.

221. This case has highlighted a proactive need to effectively advertise DV and Victim Support's DV service in Wandsworth. The focus of that awareness raising should be targeted. Using the ACORN model (a classification of regional neighbourhoods) it could be deduced that -

- a) affluent achievers
- b) rising prosperity
- c) comfortable communities

are the groups who at present Victim Support could be more proactive in reaching to raise awareness of domestic abuse?

222. Victim Support Recommendations:-

- 1) Work with Wandsworth CSU and develop plan to use White Ribbon campaign to highlight what domestic abuse is and how to access help and support
- 2) Victim Support's IRIS IDVA to work with GPs to raise awareness and create referral pathways. This will need the support of the Wandsworth CCGs and leads for GP's.
- 3) Build links with business/chamber of commerce lead to raise awareness with business managers and HR departments on domestic abuse, spotting the signs and what to do. Develop an induction pack for all new staff members joining an organisation with information on domestic abuse and support.
- 4) Victim Support operates in every borough in London. Work with Wandsworth Council

to raise awareness to their staff that confidential support can be accessed through Victim Support on a borough of their choice.

- 5) Create Wandsworth specific literature and posters aimed at particular geodemographics.

223. The DHR panel fully endorsed the recommendations of Victim Support as positive and practical ways to improve services for victims of domestic abuse.

General Practitioner – Ms FC

224. As part of our information gathering exercise we visited the surgery in Central London where Ms FC had been registered as a patient since 1997. The surgery was in Kensington which is approximately 6.5 miles from the home of the victim and a similar distance from her place of work.

225. The surgery has a patient list of about 6,000 with a staffing complement of 3 principal doctors supported by 3 trainee doctors from local teaching hospitals and a part time GP who is a professor at a London teaching hospital.

226. Ms FC could see any of the doctors when visiting the surgery but on her last visit in February 2013 was seen by one of the principal doctors. She had been first to an out of hours urgent care centre suffering from a chest complaint and then followed this up with an appointment at the doctor's surgery.

227. Her medical records show that she made six visits to the surgery over the 16 years registered with them. All the visits were for small routine ailments. There were no visits relating to physical abuse or any ailments that could have such a direct or indirect connection. She was not treated for stress, depression or any mental health issues. The records do not contain any record of domestic abuse or suspicions of anything untoward. There was nothing recorded regarding Ms FC's emotional state at any time. She is not on record as ever voicing any concerns about her physical safety.

228. There was nothing particularly memorable about any of her visits to the surgery. The principal doctor treating her in February 2013 recalls that she was quiet (perhaps shy) and deferential but other than that had no clear memory of the visit.

229. While in the surgery we checked for posters or leaflets offering support for patients who have concerns about domestic abuse. Six posters were displayed over three floors. All posters were directed at victims of domestic violence and none were related to domestic abuse which covers a much wider range of abusive behaviour including coercive control, financial, emotional, psychological abuse. It is unlikely whether any of the posters would have resonance or significance to women like Ms FC who were in a nonviolent abusive relationship. No leaflets relating to domestic abuse or violence were observed. The surgery had a directory on domestic abuse which was dated 2006.

230. The surgery did not have any policies or procedures on domestic abuse or violence. There has been no training or briefing on domestic abuse and pointers about how to identify it. The surgery knew of local organisations in the borough that could advise or give training on domestic abuse if they decided that this would be advantageous. The Women's Trust is

based in the borough.

231. Doctor's surgeries are a prime location for promoting the availability of support to domestic abuse victims. Similarly doctors are in a prime position to spot cases of domestic abuse during the course of their work. As their work is concerned with confidential issues it also is a safe environment for victims to confide about their abusive relationships.
232. There were no warning signs of domestic abuse when Ms FC visited this surgery but if there had been, unless they were glaringly obvious, there is nothing to suggest that they would have been recognised. This is the underlying reason why a recommendation will be made in this report about the staff in surgeries and medical centres being trained to understand and identify signs of domestic abuse. Secondly, we will recommend that all publicity and support material available should encompass the wide range of abusive behaviour that victims may face such as coercive control, emotional abuse, financial abuse and psychological abuse.

General Practitioner – Mr HS

233. Contact with the General Practitioner of Mr HS revealed that there was no information in his medical records of relevance to the DHR.

Analysis of Terms of Reference

234. In this part of the report the terms of reference are analysed to confirm that they have been addressed and met.
235. **ToR f)** Examine communication and co-operation between different agencies involved with Ms FC and/or Mr HS
236. **Analysis** We contacted all the statutory and voluntary agencies that could potentially have been involved with this type of domestic abuse case. For example we contacted agencies that offered support to domestic abuse victims both within the London area and nationally as we were aware that some people prefer to go outside their locality to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Neither the victim nor the perpetrator showed up on any databases. Similarly we checked hospitals for details of any accident and emergency visits for injuries sustained that could be linked to domestic abuse and the results were negative. We checked with a wide range of agencies and support networks and obtained responses that neither the victim nor perpetrator was known. The MPS were the only statutory agency holding records on them either as a couple or individually.
237. In the narrative we set out that Ms FC was a very private person who did **not** want others involved in the negative aspects of this relationship. She did not seek advice or support for a variety of reasons. This lack of involvement meant that it was very difficult to construct a proper accurate chronology because there were no official records to enable us to set dates against events. Even the judge remarked on this problem of matching events with accurate dates at the trial.
238. Issues of cooperation or communication therefore did not arise because of this lack of involvement. We also analysed the narrative to ascertain whether there should have been

any involvement or cooperation at any time between agencies during this relationship that did not in fact take place and found that there was not.

239. **ToR g)** Identify lessons to be learnt from the case about the way in which local professionals and agencies worked together to safeguard the victim and her family.
240. **Analysis** The content of the previous analysis applies equally here and will feature under other TOR headings further down. There was no working together between statutory and/or voluntary agencies in this case.
241. **ToR h)** Identify what those lessons are, how they will be acted upon and what is expected to change as a result.
242. **Analysis** This ToR was found to be not applicable in this case.
243. **ToR i)** Establish whether the agencies or inter agency responses were appropriate leading up to and at the time of the incident over the period of 29th June 2013 to 1st July 2013.
244. **Analysis** The MPS is the only agency that this ToR applies to and their response was appropriate in the circumstances and complied with the policies and procedures of that service. We looked at whether any of their actions could have been done differently or better and concluded that they could not be improved. The response to the initial call on 1st July 2013 to the police was responded to quickly and the LAS were summoned to the scene without delay. Proper records appear to have been maintained and recorded.
245. **ToR j)** Establish whether agencies have appropriate policies and procedures and associated monitoring procedures to respond to domestic abuse and to recommend any changes as a result of the review process.
246. **Analysis** The IMR from the MPS confirmed that appropriate policies and procedure in terms of domestic abuse were in place at the time of this incident and were complied with. Discussions with the MPS regarding this incident showed how proactive and forward thinking this service is regarding issues of domestic abuse. From our perspective we recognised that the MPS continuously works to improve the way they tackle domestic abuse and use organisational learning to inform their current policies, staff training and operating procedures. They are not complacent and are always willing to accept new learning and indeed have made a significant recommendation in their IMR for an enhancement to existing procedures to sure that information about support options is not only made available to victims but recorded on the records for future reference and to ensure compliance.
247. We were impressed with the proactive approach displayed by the officers in 2009 whereby they kept following up this case with the victim and did not close it until they were confident that it was unlikely to happen again and ensured that she had not withdrawn the complaint through fear or intimidation. This example of good practice should be noted.
248. We were however concerned that the check (5 years back) of the records for the risk assessment showed a 'no trace' of the perpetrator despite him have a criminal damages caution on his record that had been seen by the primary investigating officer and may well

have been the prompt for him to make quite sure that Ms FC was safe. We are aware that discussions are underway within the MPS regarding the length of the search period for checks being extended.

249. In terms of the doctor's surgery we were disappointed to hear that a large medical practice in Central London did not have policies or procedures on domestic abuse and that none of the staff had any training on the understanding of this serious problem or on how to spot its possible characteristics. We were informed that this lack of policies, procedures and training surrounding this serious social problem and health concern that affects so many families throughout the UK is not untypical in surgeries. Doctor's surgeries are in a prime position to take a lead as a gateway to support services. The National Health Service (NHS) is the service that the victims of domestic abuse are more likely to come into contact with at some point in their lives and it is important that staff understand this problem, its scale and its manifestations. This crime is heavily unreported and the recommendation for greater awareness training among surgery staff is high on our list of lessons that need to be learned.
250. At the time of this incident the large local authority which employed Ms FC did not have a domestic abuse policy for supporting its staff. Employers have a responsibility to play a part in curbing one of the UK's biggest social and economic problems and should start with the implementation of clear policies and procedures which incorporate a supportive culture. Workplaces should also give managers and supervisor's guidance on how to recognise signs that a worker may be abused at home and this training can include guidance for ways to begin a supportive conversation with an employee. We were pleased to hear that the local authority employer learned from this incident and now have policies in place for employees and managers.
251. The guidance is necessary because domestic abuse is a subject that managers struggle to respond to appropriately. People experiencing domestic abuse can be subject to disciplinary action and even lose their jobs because their behaviour, being late or absent for example, is misinterpreted. A domestic abuse workplace policy will mean that staff are able to retain their jobs and feel safe and supported in the workplace.
252. In the particular case of Ms FC, she was clearly working in a very supportive and caring environment but it was equally also clear that in 2009 she was showing the stresses and strains of domestic abuse. The managers were sympathetic to her problems and give her the space to sort out her relationship problems. At this time (2009) the focus was on domestic violence and much less was known of the equally dangerous characteristics of coercive control (control, emotional, financial and psychological abuse). In today's environment it is not sufficient for support and sensitivity to be provided simply by giving them space and not causing them acute embarrassment by not raising the subject. Today the supportive conversation must be the correct approach and accordingly we recommend that employers should take the lead and address this problem by having workplace policies on domestic abuse in place in order to fully support their staff.
253. **ToR k)** Review the care and treatment, including risk assessment and risk management of Mr HS in relation to his primary and secondary mental health care.

254. **Analysis** Mr HS has no history of mental illness and therefore received no care or treatment in relation to his mental health and accordingly was not risk assessed. His mother and brother suffered from mental health disorders and had each been sectioned at least once that we are aware of. The victim expressed concerns on a number of occasions about his mental health but there is nothing to suggest that he ever accepted that he had a problem or sought treatment or assessment. He has admitted to suffering from depression towards the end of 2004 after his father died, his brother's attempted suicide and his breakup with Ms FC. He claims that he did not recognise at the time that he was suffering from a bout of depression. His medical records do not show any treatment for depression.
255. In paragraph 182 there is reference to the discussion of Mr HS's mental health at the trial and the Judge's conclusion that the defence of diminished responsibility was not available to him as there was no evidence that he was suffering from a recognised medical condition.
256. We felt that under this ToR which relates to mental health it would be appropriate to include some reservations about mental health provision which were made by the family. In the process of compiling the report we heard how, at various times in the relationship, Ms FC voiced her concerns to friends and her mother about Mr HC's mental health. There did not appear to be any clear or obvious route that she could have taken to get help in a discreet and confidential way. The family made the point that they – 'feel very strongly that a major gap in service provision is the question of who to turn to if a partner is showing some signs of illness'. Although this does not form part of our formal recommendations, we suggest that the medical authorities should give this concern some serious consideration.
257. **ToR I)** Seek to establish whether the events over the period 29th June to 1st July 2013 could have been predicted, prevented or the likelihood of it happening could have been reduced. The evidential standards applied being on the balance of probabilities. For example if an event 'probably' would have been avoided had certain steps taken place then the balance of probability test is satisfied. If an event 'possibly' would have been avoided had certain steps taken place then the test of the balance of probability is not satisfied.
258. **Analysis** Having reviewed all the information available to us we reached a unanimous conclusion that this homicide could not have been predicted or prevented. We could not identify any action or activity that if done differently would have lessened the chances of it happening. Very little was known by any one individual or agency about this relationship. To a large extent Ms FC kept her own counsel on the problems she was facing. There were no indications that Mr HS would be physically violent. Ms FC herself never saw him as a physically violent person and she confirmed in the covert recording that he had never physically threatened her. Prior to her death the only police intervention was in 2009 which she closed down very quickly after the initial complaint and wanted no further action taken. None of the available support agencies were involved and had no knowledge of this abusive relationship.
259. With hindsight it could be hypothesised that if the police complaint in 2009 had been allowed to run its full course and Mr HS questioned it may have had some impact on his

behaviour. Similarly, if she had sought professional support on one of the occasions when his behaviour was unacceptable she may have had the confidence and strength to walk away. However, speculating with hindsight has no value in this review except perhaps to indicate the direction to ways that services and support mechanisms can be more easily available and packaged so that they are taken up by victims who can see the benefits of proactive police action before behaviour gets worse or see how support and advice can help reveal exit routes out of what seems an impossible situation. With this in mind we are making recommendations on the advice available from police and how the support mechanisms can reach certain specific demographics such as the group that Ms FC belonged to.

260. **ToR m)** Examine whether information sharing and communication within and between agencies regarding Ms FC and Mr HS was effective and comprehensive; did it enable joint understanding and working between agencies; were all appropriate agencies involved in the information sharing.
261. **Analysis** This ToR is not applicable because of the lack of statutory and/or voluntary agencies involved in this case.
262. **ToR n)** Examine whether the sharing of information was sufficient to facilitate “joined up working”.
263. **Analysis** This ToR is not applicable because of the lack of statutory and/or voluntary agencies involved in this case.
264. **ToR o)** Examine whether previous “learning” from local or national cases had been acted upon.
265. **Analysis** The MPS, as stated earlier is a proactive organisation that puts great value on the learning within London and nationwide. The approach to domestic abuse and violence has changed rapidly over the last few years and the MPS has been in the forefront of leading these changes. Learning is always quickly adopted and steps taken to ensure that it is applied. In this particular case we cannot identify any areas where organisational learning has not been accepted or applied.
266. **ToR p)** Examine whether data protection issues or client confidentiality concerns impeded the sharing or dissemination of information.
267. **Analysis** There were no instances where concerns about confidentiality or data protection prevented the sharing or dissemination of information.
268. **ToR q)** Examine whether there were any early warning signs of aggression or violent behaviour and what actions followed.
269. **Analysis** There were no early warning signs of aggression or violent behaviour available to any statutory or voluntary agency before this killing. The caution on Mr HS’s police record related to criminal damage to an inanimate object – door. The judge remarked that his violent behaviour always seemed to be related to inanimate objects, doors and walls. We know that he demonstrated this type of behaviour when he was with his former wife and also that he kicked in Ms FC’s door. His caution in 2004 was also for kicking in a door.

270. Violence demonstrated towards inanimate objects can be a warning sign of a potentially violent person. This type of behaviour and physical signs can serve as warning signs that a situation could turn violent. These behaviours always need to be taken "in context" and with awareness to look for multiple warning signs and for signs of escalation (the behaviours are getting worse). Mr HS's temper outbursts against inanimate objects were related to times when his relationships were under stress and not going the way he wanted but none of these incidents were known to the agencies involved in this review. The MPS were aware of the caution (2004) for criminal damage (kicking in a door) at the time of Ms FC's complaint and accordingly took appropriate action to ensure she was safe.
271. **ToR r)** Examine whether the level of risk posed by the perpetrator was assessed and addressed properly; whether there was an appropriate intervention plan.
272. **Analysis** A risk assessment was undertaken in April 2009 as a secondary investigation following the complaint by Ms FC that Mr HS was harassing her and it was graded as standard. The records show that the background checks showed a 'no trace' result and this was not correct. We do not know whether the Investigation Officer was aware of the caution for criminal damage and took this into consideration when reaching his 'standard' grade for the potential risk. There were no incidents that prompted a police intervention after March 2009 and therefore no further risk assessments were undertaken.
273. **ToR s)** Examine whether equality and diversity issues were considered appropriately by all the agencies involved with the family of Ms FC.
274. **Analysis** We have not identified any equality or diversity issues in this case in respect of the family of Ms FC. They are white British residents and there are no diversity, disability or sexual orientation concerns.
275. We approached the family of Mr HS through his sister and were informed that they would only participate in this review if he approved of the participation. Mr HS did not accept our invitation to contribute to this review and has not entered into any form of communication of any sort with us. We are therefore not aware of any equality or diversity issues with Mr HS or his family.
276. While we accept that there were no direct diversity issues in this case it is worth pointing out that there were indirect issues of ethnicity that had implications for the way Ms FC dealt with the police. She had concerns about how Mr HS, as a black male, would be treated by the police and also the future implications for him from having a criminal record. These were some of the reasons why she was reluctant to pursue police involvement in her complaint made in 2009.
277. **ToR t)** Seek the involvement of the family, employers, neighbours & friends to provide a robust analysis of the events.
278. **Analysis** The Chairman of the DHR panel attended parts of the trial to meet and introduce himself to the friends and family of Ms FC and to explain about the review that would start when the court hearing had been concluded. It was also a very good opportunity to answer questions and to ask for cooperation.

279. We invited all the family and friends to participate and asked them as a minimum to sign an authorisation for the MPS to provide us with a copy of the information provided to them in witness statements. We respected the wishes of those friends or family who did not wish to take up this invitation for whatever reason.
280. We maintained contact with the mother of Ms FC during the course of this review in order to keep her apprised of developments and to enable her to contribute suggestions as the review progressed.
281. We took note of the concerns of the mother of Ms FC about the lack of availability to us of certain documents such as the defence psychiatric report and raised these concerns with the MPS. The mother had attended the trial when this report was presented and observed it being subjected to questioning and took the view that it contained important information that helped explain the abusive behaviour of the perpetrator. She was very surprised to learn that we did not have access to this report as it was presented into the public domain at the court hearing. The availability of documents used in the court hearing forms one of the recommendations set out later in this report.
282. For the meetings with the friends and family we travelled to the locations which were most convenient to them. The interviews with work colleagues were held in the workplace by prior agreement with the employer who very kindly made all the arrangements and provided a confidential setting for the discussions.
283. We offered meetings with the family to discuss our draft report and to obtain their feedback.
284. **ToR u)** Take account of the criminal proceedings and coroners' inquest in terms of timing and contact with the family and/or the perpetrator.
285. **Analysis** We paused the timing of the review at the request of MPS in order not to compromise the criminal proceedings. We obtained contact details of the friends and family at the conclusion of the trial and made contact at this point.
286. **ToR v)** Produce a report which summarises the chronology of the events, including the actions of involved agencies, analyses and comments on the actions taken and makes any required recommendations regarding safeguarding of families and children where domestic abuse is a feature.
287. **Analysis** A report has been authored by the independent chairman of the DHR, Mr Patrick Watson, and agreed by the panel members and the Wandsworth Partnership. It analyses in detail the behaviour of the victim and the perpetrator in order to better understand the nature of their relationship in order to plot a course for future action in order to minimise tragedies like this happening in the future.

Survey of support mechanisms and publicity

288. We carried out a survey of the domestic abuse support services in the areas in which the victim lived and worked and also in the area where the perpetrator had a property. We

also included adjacent areas close to Ms FC's home in the event that she went slightly further afield for help in order to achieve greater anonymity.

289. The survey established that if a victim seeks assistance from a borough in which he or she does not reside then normally they will be directed to their home borough for on-going support.
290. Our findings were that all Boroughs provided support services to victims of domestic abuse in varying forms and most had programmes of engagement with local GPs. All had an advocacy service and most are developing a health based awareness raising programme.

Conclusions and Key Learning

291. The DHR reviewed and analysed the information available and drew a number of conclusions and identified key learning which is set out below.
292. We reached the overall conclusion that this homicide was not preventable or predictable. We could also not identify any actions or interventions that if done differently could have prevented or predicted this tragedy. The MPS were the only agency involved in this case and we found that they followed their policies and procedures and behaved appropriately. Their action in 2009 at the time of a complaint by Ms FC is noted as an example of best practice.
293. Throughout this review we retained reservations about the use of the descriptive term, 'domestic violence' as in our view it directs focus to signs of physical assault as indicators of domestic abuse. It inadvertently directs attention away from the more subtle coercive control characteristics such as emotional, psychological and financial abuse and could make victims who suffer this type of behaviour unaware they are in an abusive relationship or unaware that the support services offered apply to them. The definition of domestic violence does include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are, in themselves, inherently 'violent' - hence we prefer to use the term 'domestic abuse' rather than 'domestic violence' and would advocate this as a more meaningful term.
294. Given the lack of statutory or voluntary agencies involved in this case we are therefore not in a position to draw attention to organisational failures or improvements to help prevent similar tragedies in the future. Accordingly, with the benefit of hindsight, we have taken a wider remit in terms of organisational improvements and recommendations that would have helped Ms FC if they had been in place when she was a victim of abuse.
295. The domestic abuse of Ms FC started within the first two years of the relationship beginning and continued on and off for a further ten years. No doubt there were often good times within this period but they do not offset or nullify the bad times. We know that in around 2003 she had voiced her fears and told others she was afraid of him and asked for help to escape from his control. The next ten years followed a pattern of breakups and reuniting to the extent that family and friends were never quite sure when they were together or apart.
296. Ms FC has repeatedly been portrayed as a very private person and this accounted for her

reticence in discussing her private life and in particular her relationship with Mr HS. When conversations started to be about her she would turn it away from the focus on her. Occasionally at times of stress she lowered her guard and talked about Mr HS and expressed the negative way she felt about the relationship. Apart from these periods of openness her friends told us that they felt that he was a taboo subject. We started to form the view that she compartmentalised her life particularly in respect of Mr HS because she had become aware of his negative side and often worried about what he would do if life did not go the way he thought it should.

297. We feel that the information before us indicated that Mr HS was a taboo subject because she was embarrassed that she stayed in the relationship with him despite his appalling behaviour. She did not want her family to think negatively of him and kept his controlling behaviour from them. She knew that none of her friends liked him and that they knew instinctively he was not right for her. We feel that she was well aware that any discussion involving him would result in advice to walk away and this was the very thing she felt unable to do. Her solution to avoid this unwelcome advice, to use a colloquialism, was to 'keep her cards pretty close to her chest'. In doing so she effectively cut herself off from much needed advice and support from her family and friendship network.
298. Despite the fact that she was fearful of his behaviour and explosive temper she kept being continuously drawn back into the relationship as she was nevertheless protective of him; and her intrinsic kindness meant she wanted to let him down gently when it came to ending the relationship. She wanted the relationship to end but sought to do this with sensitivity and for him to emerge with his pride and ego intact. She showed him sensitivity and kindness which he did not deserve. In addition we formed the view that she could not find the strength to stand up to him because his constant emotional and psychological abuse wore her down undermining her self-esteem and self-confidence and in the end it was easier not to resist.
299. We reached a conclusion that Mr HS was a repeat abuser of women. He had a history of coercive abuse as evidenced by the testimony of his former wife at his trial. He had a significant number of diagnosed personality traits which retrospectively matched the widely used characteristics of domestic abusers. He did not resort to physical violence when in a relationship but did so in both cases when he was rejected and the relationship was over.
300. In our view these personality traits referred to in paragraphs 183 to 193 seemed to mean he had a pathological need to control his relationships and to be in control of all aspects of his victim's life. We looked at how he tried to deprive both his former wife and Ms FC of their autonomy, to isolate them from support mechanisms, intimidating them and behaving as if he had an inalienable right to do so. His grandiosity (unrealistic sense of superiority) fuelled his perceived right to dominate and his lack of empathy. Many of the things that he did were small, not high in volume and could seem inconsequential to an observer but cumulatively they had huge impact in terms of their disempowering of the victim. There is therefore a subtlety, often present in coercive control as there was in this case, that can render the appearance of women's experience of abuse invisible.
301. Mr HS used control and coercion which the researcher and author Evan Stark in his book,

'Coercive Control' (2009), says is a deadly combination. Stark's research following years of work as a practitioner led him to a conclusion which was uncannily accurate in this case – "The combination of coercion and control is the most devastating ... the presence of control in an abusive relationship predicts partner homicide far better than the severity or frequency of violence"

302. There are a number of learning points to emerge from this case
303. **The key role of Police** We have a recommendation from the police for officers called to domestic abuse situations to distribute support information to victims. They are ideally placed to identify victims and to act as a gateway to support mechanisms. This is a very sensible recommendation that has the potential to have significant benefits by helping to bring support opportunities to victims at the earliest possible stage. For it to be effective the MPS ensures that their first and secondary officers responding to call outs fully understand that the definition of domestic violence has moved on from the focus on physical harm to include coercive control. The MPS put a great deal of effort into making sure that front line officers are knowledgeable about emotional, psychological and financial abuse and have the knowledge necessary to engage confidently and competently with victims of domestic abuse. The appreciation of the harm it causes to victims and their children is essential if officers are to carry out effectively their core policing activities of keeping victims safe.
304. The HMIC recently reported that that crime relating to domestic abuse constitutes some eight percent of all recorded crime of some police forces and one third of their recorded assaults with injury. On average the police receive an emergency call relating to domestic abuse every 30 seconds. Research from the House of Commons shows that 830,000 cases of domestic abuse were reported in England and Wales during 2012-13 and this is only the tip of the iceberg. The need for police expertise in this area of crime is without question. But it would be naïve to think that domestic abuse is simply a criminal matter which will be solved by good policing and it is not enough to just train police officers. The recommendation above for police to take a more active role in providing information about support mechanisms will only be effective if they (the police) continue to be supported by local authorities and the health services who are prepared to advocate for the provision of good quality support services and training for frontline workers who deal with domestic violence.
305. **History of abuse** is the best indicator of future abusive relationships. It is therefore important that domestic abuse is reported and recorded. Many of those abused (both men and women) just want to flee the abuser and do not want the stress and possible retribution they fear may follow legal action. The legislation now allows the police to commence prosecutions without the victim having to consent to this course of action and this is a massive improvement and way forward.
306. It is important that abuse is recorded whether it is by organisations such as Victim Support or the police as this may help future potential victims otherwise abusers can emerge from a damaged relationship with a 'clean sheet'.
307. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (Clare's Law) went live nationwide on 8th March

2014, giving members of the public a 'right to ask' police where they have a concern that their partner may pose a risk to them or where they are concerned that the partner of a member of their family or a friend may pose a risk to that individual. This is a mammoth step forward but it will only achieve its objective if more is done to encourage victims to report abuse.

308. **Awareness of Invisible Abuse** Publicity about coercive control as a form of domestic abuse is slowly gathering momentum. The previous widespread concentration on physical violence as the core definition of domestic abuse meant that without the signs of physical harm victims were not recognised as such. The change of definition of domestic abuse to include coercive control demonstrated to victims suffering from a loss of freedom in their personal, social and economic life that their violation was at last being taken seriously. At the time Ms FC was a victim of abuse the emphasis was on physical harm and it is highly likely that she may not have even seen herself as a casualty of domestic abuse. Individually each aspect of coercive abuse can be seemingly insignificant to everyone else and be seen as nothing more than normal relationship dynamics. If she had walked through her doctor's surgery she would have seen six posters offering support to victims of violence and may not have seen any connection between them and her problems as her relationship was not a violent one.
309. There is a need to significantly heighten knowledge of coercive control as a serious form of domestic abuse so that victims and their families and friends recognise its characteristics and manifestations and realise that it does not have to be tolerated. This cannot be done successful without making some financial investment and needs a firm commitment of resources to prevent further tragedies. It would be naive to think awareness is the solution. Awareness is simply the first step in empowering women (with appropriate support) to take back control of their lives.
310. It should be noted that the Home Office have identified these gaps in awareness and understanding of what constitutes domestic violence and abuse in their recent publication 'Common themes identified as lessons to be learned'. They identify the focus on physical abuse as leading to a failure to recognise the power and control aspects in some cases. They have taken steps nationally to tackle this awareness problem and have given advice on how local organisations can improve awareness and communication.
311. **Inclusive Targeting.** Ms FC was a well-educated high flyer from a professional family background and the current awareness campaigns do not appear to us to be targeting people like her and the strategies need to be rethought so that they are all inclusive. Drop in centres, for example, are available in most London boroughs and are open for face to face advice for a few hours each day. The opening times of these drop-in centres are generally during the day and do not appear to cater for working people with work commitments. There is a need for day time support centres for women who cannot easily leave the home at night but workers with day time jobs also need to be catered for. There is no guarantee that working people like Ms FC would visit evening support centres but it is important that the provision is there. This need for more inclusive targeting has been highlighted in the recommendations made by Victim Support.
312. **Anonymity** The availability of telephone support centres where victims could discuss

their situation anonymously was felt to need much improved publicity and awareness. Being able to talk freely without being known was seen by the panel as an important first step in seeking more structured support. Given Ms FC's determination to keep her relationship problems private, access to an anonymised helpline (similar to the Samaritans) may have had some attraction. This type of support is available but this is not well known and more effective publicity is needed.

313. Victim Support referred to their telephone 'SupportLine' in their IMR above and provided some helpful online advice for victims on maintaining anonymity and confidentiality.

'Dial 141 to hide your number. Please check with your network provider as this doesn't work on some mobile networks. If you phone us, the number will appear on your itemised bill. If someone else will see your telephone bill and you don't want them to know you've called the Supportline, you may prefer to use a public telephone or pay as you go mobile'.

314. **Advocates** During the review we recognised the value of the Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVA) which arose from a government initiative introduced to reduce the number of Domestic Related Homicides. IDVAs focus on high risk clients by supporting them on a one-to-one basis to develop a support and safety plan to meet their needs and provide practical and emotional support to clients before crisis level is reached. The benefits of this support mechanism to these high risk clients are clear and we felt that there would also be advantages if this type of intervention was available to victims lower down the risk level before their abusive relationships got worse. Resources will always be an issue but a scheme based on volunteers could have some merit.
315. **GP Surgeries – more effective role in DA** During the course of this review we were surprised that the profile of domestic abuse in GP's surgeries was not higher and this was disturbing. We took the view that role of general practitioners in detecting and supporting domestic abuse victims is under exploited and they could be used more effectively. Many people experiencing abuse believe that their GP can be trusted with disclosure and GPs can offer practical support to protect people who disclose abuse. In this particular case the staff in the surgery attended by Ms FC had no policies or procedures for dealing with domestic abuse. They had no training in order to understand domestic abuse, how to recognise its characteristics or what to do if they did identify victims.
316. GP surgeries have a key role in the community and are a clear and obvious gateway to support mechanisms. For this to be a realistic development would mean that the staff in medical centres undertaking training in domestic abuse. While the signs of physical harm can be identified by the trained eye in a medical setting the subtleties of coercive control are less well known and often not recognised. We were informed that there is a high cost to the health service of domestic abuse and it seems to us that resources directed at identifying the signs of this problem among patients could be cost effective. HMIC estimates that domestic abuse costs society £15.7 billion a year and not to take significant action to reduce this would be negligent. The WHO recognises Domestic Abuse as not only a criminal issue but also as a public health concern because of the long-term health consequences for people who have experienced it. We were not convinced that enough was being done within the arena of public health to deal effectively with this serious issue.

317. There are examples of very good work being done in this area throughout London and we were pleased to see that within Wandsworth an IDVA is funded by Public Health and employed specifically to undertake the delivery of domestic violence and VAWG training to Health professionals and delivery of an independent advocacy service. In addition the IDVA provides a high quality pro-active service to victims of domestic violence and abuse, delivering a service to those at highest risk.
318. This initiative in Wandsworth is part of IRIS - Identification and Referral to Improve Safety programme which is collaboration between primary care and third sector organisations specialising in DVA (such as Victim Support). The core areas of the programme are training and education, clinical enquiry, care pathways and an enhanced referral pathway to specialist domestic violence services. It is aimed at women who are experiencing domestic abuse from a current partner, ex-partner or adult family member. IRIS also provides information and signposting for male victims and for perpetrators. An advocate educator is linked to general practices and based in a local specialist DVA service. The advocate educator works in partnership with a local clinical lead to co-deliver the training to practices. Development of this IRIS programme is our recommended approach to making more effective use of GP surgeries in the fight to tackle domestic abuse. The GP surgery in this case was not in Wandsworth and we ask Public Health to take responsibility for dissemination of the message across borough boundaries.
319. The Home Office in their publication 'Common Themes Identified as Lessons to be Learned' drew attention to the need for improved training and awareness on domestic violence and abuse for GPs and healthcare professionals.
320. **Abuser interventions** The panel was also of the view that while advice and support towards victims should be increased there was a danger of ignoring the preventive work that should be directed to perpetrators and suspects. Most interventions to date have focused on work with the female victim/survivor and this puts her as the key person responsible for change. Research in Minnesota, identified power and control as the main factors in male violence and their research has shown that violence is learnt behaviour and is not inherent and can therefore be unlearned and behaviour changed. Abusive behaviour is a choice and a key aim must be to make abusers accept responsibility for their actions. Since 2000 the London Domestic Violence Forum has put the emphasis on holding the abuser accountable but there is a lack of resources directed towards this objective. This resources issue must change and action directed at the root of the problem rather than only dealing with its consequences.
321. We were informed that most abuser support provision is directed at convicted perpetrators and we were strongly of the view that intervention, where possible, at an earlier stage would be equally valuable.
322. **Workplace Support** During the analysis stage of the ToR we drew attention to our view that all major employers should have workplace policies in place to support staff suffering from domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can have a high cost for businesses because of unplanned time off, lateness, sick pay and decreased productivity and performance. Domestic abuse can have a devastating and long term effect on a survivor's mental health and the Government cite it as probably the most prevalent cause of stress and

depression in women and it is therefore not surprising that it can have an impact on work performance. The effects of domestic abuse on women subjected to this type of abusive behaviour can be misinterpreted as poor performance or lack of commitment and can cause them problems in terms of their continued employment and/or promotion. Workplace policies should be adopted which demonstrate that employers will take this issue seriously and will be supportive of women who are in abusive relationships.

323. The Government introduced a Responsibility Deal Health at Work pledge appropriate for all organisations wanting to help and support staff facing domestic violence was launched in June 2013 because every workplace up and down the country is touched by this issue. Many major employers have signed the pledge as a public statement of their commitment but it is our experience that this initiative is not well known and needs a re-launch. The pledge states –

“We will treat people within our organisation with respect and dignity. We will do everything we can to prevent stalking, violence or abuse either in the workplace or that has an effect on people in the workplace, whether from a colleague, family member or anyone else. This will include having guidance in place which is suitable to the size of our organisation. The guidance will ensure that an appropriate, safe and sensitive response can be implemented and our employees supported when they raise such an issue.”

324. The workplace policy in place in Wandsworth Council has provision for a ‘buddy system’ with a neighbouring borough whereby staff who are concerned about confidentiality issues within their workplace can obtain advice and support from a victim support service in this neighbouring borough. Part of the implementation plan is for all HR managers to undertake a customised version of the IRIS training to increase their understanding of the subject and increase their effectiveness. This reciprocal arrangement and customised training for HR managers was a noted example of good practice.

325. **Access to information used in the criminal prosecution** This review was hampered by the unfortunate lack of involvement of statutory and voluntary agencies and this meant that the normal flow of chronologies and IMRs which provide valuable information to inform the work of the panel was not available. We were fortunate to have good police briefings and a great deal of background information from family and friends. The perpetrator, Mr HS, produced a document chronicling his relationship with the victim (My life with XXXX, a woman of many faces) and he had also covertly recorded one of his two and a half hour controlling conversations with her. In addition he pleaded guilty to manslaughter with diminished responsibility and a psychiatric assessment was presented at the trial by the defence. This psychiatric assessment set out a number of the personality traits that he suffered from such as grandiosity, enlightenment, possessiveness, lack of empathy etc. which also feature prominently in the characteristics of domestic abusers. The panel was of the opinion that these documents gave a significant insight into his abusive behaviour and that the two documents and the recording should be made available to us to use as appropriate in carrying out the review. We made a request to the MPS for copies of these items.

326. During meetings with the family and friends the documents and recording were raised

frequently in order to illustrate points and there was genuine amazement that we, despite our requests, were not given access to them. The family were particularly concerned that the psychiatric assessment was not made available to us as they felt that the issues surrounding his mental health were important considerations for this review and were essential to enable us having a comprehensive understanding and picture of what happened. We made further representations to the MPS and we were provided with a copy of the document, 'My life with XXXX ...' and a transcript of the covert recording. The MPS informed us that it was not within their power to provide us with a copy of the psychiatric assessment.

327. The recommendation below is a not criticism of the Police them but an indication that there needs to be a presumption in favour of disclosure unless there are clear legal grounds preventing this.
328. The family continue to be unhappy with the lack of disclosure of this document and we made an undertaking that we would include their concerns in this report. They tried to identify ways around this lack of disclosure and at their suggestion we approached the defence psychiatrist direct to ascertain whether she would be willing to be interviewed by us in her capacity as a witness at the trial to discuss her testimony. The psychiatrist was very sympathetic to the needs of the family and could see how such a discussion could be of benefit. Unfortunately her assessment came out of an instruction by Mr HS and his team and she was not able to break confidentiality without permission which she sought from his solicitor. She informed us that she would really like to help but that it will not be possible to disentangle what she said in court from her knowledge of Mr HS obtained by interviews and papers. We are not hopeful of obtaining consent for disclosure from Mr HS as he has so far ignored all requests to engage with the DHR process.
329. The family retained the view that this report will be incomplete without a mental health perspective.
330. The view of the panel is that documents used in the conviction of domestic abusers should be made available to DHR panels upon request if a reasonable case can be made that these would be beneficial.

Recommendations

331. **Recommendation 1** The police to develop a procedure whereby every domestic abuse victim is provided with details of their local domestic violence support agencies and given information of options available and to record on the CRIS that this information was given.
332. **Recommendation 2** The CSP should take responsibility for leading a campaign for the greater understanding of domestic abuse with particular attention on the less well known aspects related to non-violent abuse.
333. **Recommendation 3** Public Health should take the lead in ensuring the IRIS programme is taken up by GP surgeries in increasing numbers with the aim of achieving 100% coverage within 12 months.

334. **Recommendation 4** Abuser intervention should be given a higher profile so that the source of the abuse problem is proactively tackled rather than just the consequences. The CSP should review this issue and determine how best to progress it with the aim for the borough to have an effective programme in place within 12 months.
335. **Recommendation 5** Publicity and support mechanisms should be subject to annual review to ensure that they are targeted at all sections of the community and that there are no gaps in coverage.
336. **Recommendation 6** Workplace domestic abuse policies and procedures should be put in place by all major employers and public sector organisations should take the lead in adopting this approach and setting a good example. The Responsibility Deal Health at Work pledge should be re-launched locally.
337. **Recommendation 7** Evidence used in the criminal proceeding should be made available to DHRs if it would assist in the understanding of the case.