



Safer Lincolnshire Partnership

Domestic Homicide Review

The Homicides of Claire and Charlotte Hart

July 19th 2016

“Our father was a terrorist living within our own home; he had no cause but to frighten his family and to generate his own esteem from trampling and bullying us. For over a decade we had tried to leave on numerous occasions but he manipulated and threatened us on every occasion”.

Luke and Ryan Hart, March 2017

Independent Author: Dr Russell Wate QPM

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1. Timescale for completion

1.1 This report was commissioned by the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP). They are a statutory body which brings together a number of agencies with the aim of reducing crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour across the county. These agencies work jointly to improve the safety of residents and visitors by information sharing and partnership activity. One of the key safeguarding roles of the partnership is that of tackling domestic abuse.

1.2 On the 21st July 2016 in accordance with the Lincolnshire Domestic Homicide Review protocol, Lincolnshire Police notified the Chair of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership that an incident which had taken place in the town of Spalding was being investigated as a domestic homicide. The incident was being treated as a double murder and a suicide. There were three persons deceased as a direct consequence of the incident. The Chair of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership considered the case, in conjunction with other key agencies, and concluded that the case met the criteria for a Domestic Homicide Review. The Home Office was notified in accordance with national guidance.

1.3 The SLP held the first panel meeting in January 2017 and commissioned the review appointing as the Independent Chair and author, Dr Russell Wate QPM, who has compiled this overview report.

1.4 The following timescales were agreed by the DHR panel at a further panel meeting on April 19th 2017.

- Draft IMR's submission May 2017.
- Quality assurance of IMR's June 2017.
- Draft report August 2017 and panel consideration.
- 2nd Draft Overview report circulation and family and panel consideration September 2017
- Final report to panel and family October 2017
- Finalise overview and executive summary October/November 2017
- Submission to Home Office QA Panel March 2018

2. Terms of Reference

2.1 The following terms of reference was adopted by the panel.

2.2 The purpose of this Domestic Homicide Review is to:

- Establish what lessons are to be learned from the domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims;
- Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result;
- Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate; and
- Prevent domestic violence homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence victims and their children through improved intra and inter-agency working.
- Contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic violence and abuse
- To highlight good practice.

2.3 It is also essential that this review undertakes to illuminate the past to understand when and where the trail of abuse commenced and to identify how this was perpetuated in order to protect the future.

2.4 The subjects of the review are identified as follows. The family expressed their strong wishes for them not to be anonymised. Other family members and friends will be anonymised.

Victims	Date of Birth	Relationship
Claire Hart	28/12/1965	Wife/Mother
Charlotte Hart	10/12/1996	Daughter

Perpetrator	Date of Birth	Relationship
Lance Hart	13/09/1958	Husband/Father

2.5 The historical period for the review was determined as being from 25th July 2012 to 19th July 2016, with agencies given the scope to examine other issues outside of the timeframe if considered relevant.

2.6 The aim and objectives of each IMR is to:

Allow agencies to look openly and critically at individual and organisational practice and the context within which people were working to see whether the homicide indicates that changes could and should be made.

- To identify how those changes will be brought about.
- To identify examples of good practice within agencies.

2.7 The IMR authors were also asked to consider the following when compiling their respective reports.

- a) To examine whether there were any previous concerns, incidents, significant life events or indications which might have signalled the risk of violence to any of the subjects or given rise to other concerns or instigated other interventions.
- b) When and in what way were practitioner's sensitive to the needs of the subjects, knowledgeable about potential indicators of domestic violence and abuse and aware of what to do if they had concerns about a victim or perpetrator? Was it reasonable to expect them, given their level of training and knowledge, to fulfil these expectations?
- c) When, and in what way, were the subjects' wishes and feelings ascertained and considered? Were the subjects informed of options/choices to make informed decisions? Were they signposted to other agencies and how accessible were these services to the subjects?
- d) What were the key points or opportunities for assessment and decision making in this case? Do assessments and decisions appear to have been reached in an informed and professional way?
- e) Was appropriate professional curiosity exercised by those professionals and agencies working with the individuals in the case, this includes whether professionals analysed any relevant historical information and acted upon it?
- f) Were the actions of agencies in contact with all subjects appropriate, relevant and effective to the individual and collective family needs and risks identified at the time and continually monitored and reviewed?
- g) Did the agency have policies and procedures for Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding and were any assessments correctly used in the case of the subjects? Were these

assessment tools, procedures and policies professionally accepted as being effective?
Was the victim subject to a MARAC or other multi-agency fora?

- h) Did actions or risk management plans fit with the assessment and decisions made?
Were appropriate services offered or provided, or relevant enquiries made in the light of the assessments, given what was known or what should have been known at the time?
- i) Were any issues of disability, diversity, culture or identity relevant?
- j) To consider whether there are training needs arising from this case
- k) To consider the management oversight and supervision provided to workers involved
- l) Did any restructuring during the period under review likely to have had an impact on the quality of the service delivered?

3. Methodology

3.1 It is important that this domestic homicide review has due regard to the legislation concerning what constitutes domestic abuse which is defined as:

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 and emotional.

3.2 The Government definition also outlines the following, which is extremely relevant to this review:

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

3.3 Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 created a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship. Prior to the introduction of this offence, case law indicated the difficulty in proving a pattern of behaviour amounting to harassment within an intimate relationship.¹ The new offence, which does not have retrospective effect, came into force on 29th December 2015.

3.4 The Independent Chair and author identified at an early stage that although the involvement of the agencies was important in gaining an understanding of the inter and intra-agency work, and the provision of the respective IMR's, that this case highlighted that the contribution from the family, friends and work colleagues would be the main and dynamic part of the review process.

3.5 Consequently, this work was undertaken by the author as the essential part of the overview process in order to add value to understanding the background that led to the deaths. As such this information forms the significant part of the report.

3.6 The contributing agencies providing IMR's or reports are detailed below. The personal details of relatives (other than the two sons/brothers at their request), friends and work-colleagues are held by the author and are not used within this report.

4. Involvement of family, friends and work colleagues

4.1 As already stated in the previous section, the contribution of family (both maternal and a request was made to paternal side, but declined, but was provided through information agreed to the coroner and had nothing further to add to this), friends and work colleagues of Claire to this process has been a significant driver in gaining an understanding of what things were like for the family. This was over a long period of time in particular for Claire, but also for Charlotte. The wider family have also provided an insight to the early part of their relationship and marriage to the perpetrator before the births of the children. The review author has considered that recollections of the family/colleagues/friends are their own experiences and may not be what the perpetrator would say happened. However, considering the totality of the information presented, this review report represents consistent and cohesive narrative of the behaviour of the perpetrator and lived experience of the Hart family.

4.2 All homicides are tragedies and the aftermath of such catastrophic events change lives forever. The two-surviving sons, Luke Hart and Ryan Hart, have specifically asked that the story

¹ The Statutory Guidance cites the following cases - Curtis [2010] EWCA Crim 123 and Widdows [2011] EWCA Crim 1500.

of their mother, sister and their experiences of family life is not only heard, but is understood. In support of this, as stated above, they do not wish to be anonymised. Their wish is for the facts of what their home life was like, for many years, culminating in the events of July 2016, to be opened to as wide an audience as is possible in the hope that others whom may be experiencing a similar pattern of behaviour, can seek support and speak out having learned of their experiences. The review author confirmed with them that they had received the Home Office leaflet and also mentioned advocacy to them if they wanted it². Both the boys are extremely articulate and felt they were able to be advocates for themselves, and in fact wanted to do so, on behalf of their family. They have worked with the domestic abuse charity 'Refuge' who helped them to review the draft report and add comments where necessary.

4.3 In support of this, the review has extended to other family members, both maternal and paternal to look at the wider picture. Clearly, this extends far beyond the date parameters as determined by the SLP but is nevertheless crucial in gaining the 'bigger picture'. Ultimately this is made to assist agencies in broadening their approach to domestic abuse but moreover to ensure that this review amplifies the reality of the situation for this family. Both Luke and Ryan are survivors and still victims at the same time.

4.4 The support of friends and work-colleagues has also been a key part of this process and the review wishes to pay due regard to those contributions. It is again important to recognise that several close friends of Claire have experienced considerable trauma because of this tragedy. Their openness and honesty has been instrumental in gaining a broad and independent perspective. Those contributions are contextual and will remain anonymous out of respect for those individuals.

4.5 Both Luke and Ryan have already acceded to media requests to highlight their story and have been interviewed in a television programme, which has had a nationwide circulation and for a national newspaper. What was apparent in that process and in their continued contact with the independent author of this report is their determination to ensure that they can support this process moving forward. Their tenacity in this respect has been exemplary and is quite frankly inspirational, bearing in mind what they have suffered.

5 Contributors

5.1 The following agencies have contributed to the process and have provided IMR's or reports.

² The review author highlighted 'Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse' (AAFDA) to them, albeit he appreciates there may be other organisations that could be advocates.

Agency	IMR Author/contributor
United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust	Elaine Todd
Education Services, LCC	Jill Chandar-Nair
Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Liz Bainbridge
Lincolnshire Community Health Services	Fiona Milner
Lincolnshire CCG's	Claire Tozer
General Practice	Terri Zeferino
Lincolnshire Police	Graham White
East Midlands Ambulance Service	Lucy Gascoigne
University of Northampton	Lisa Barnett-Newton

6 Panel members

6.1 The DHR panel is composed as follows, and they met on a number of occasions both in person and virtually in order to examine the reports and overview report. The two sons/brothers have also had the opportunity to read at length the review; they participated in the final panel meeting via Skype and talked to the panel members at length and expressed their views.

Agency	Advisor
United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust	Elaine Todd
Education Services, LCC	John O' Connor
Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust	Liz Bainbridge
Lincolnshire Community Health Services	Jill Anderson/Barbara Mitchell
Lincolnshire CCG's	Claire Tozer
GP	Dr Dougie Burgess
Lincolnshire Police	Rick Hatton
East Midlands Ambulance	Zoe Rodger-Fox

Service	
Legal Advisor to Panel	Toni Geraghty
Lincolnshire County Council Domestic Abuse Manager- Advisor to Panel	Karen Shooter/Sara Barry
Independent Chair and author Support to Chair	Russell Wate James Bambridge
Lincolnshire County Council Administrator	Teresa Tennant
Domestic Abuse Specialist (SOLDAS) (Voluntary Sector)	Sarah Smith/Carmella Mann

7. Author

7.1 The Independent author of this report is Dr Russell Wate QPM of RJW Associates.

7.2 Dr Wate is a retired senior police detective and has an enhanced knowledge of dealing with domestic abuse. He is the Independent Chair of the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards. As a Senior Investigating Officer, he has managed many homicide cases, in particular those involving domestic homicide and a number of other high-profile cases. He has been the Independent author for several domestic homicide reviews, and serious case reviews across England and Wales. He has also carried out the Home Office funded DHR training.

7.3 Dr Wate and RJW Associates is Independent of all agencies and the commissioning body of this report. He has never worked in this Community Safety Partnership area before.

8 Equality and diversity

8.1 Each of the IMR's and this overview report has considered the key issues of diversity both in respect of the victims, the survivors, the extended family and the contributions from family and friends. Where any specific issue is encountered, this will be dealt with in the narrative of the report.

8.2 The author wishes to point out that there are no obvious omissions in respect of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 by any of the agencies and that due

regard to such issues has been considered throughout.

8.3 It is acknowledged that all the victims are of white, British ethnicity and there are no religious, cultural or other issues identified from the information provided to the author that would suggest that the perpetrator's feelings of dishonour, deceit and retribution were connected to any cultural or religious beliefs he may have had. It is highlighted by the review author that although the perpetrator intended to kill the whole family, he did in fact kill two women. Domestic Homicide and domestic abuse in particular, is predominately a gender crime, with women by far making up the majority of victims, and by far the vast majority of perpetrators are male. *A detailed breakdown of homicides reveals substantial gendered differences. Female victims tend to be killed by partners/ex-partners. In England and Wales 46% of all females killed in 2013/2014 were killed by partner or ex-partner, compared to just 7% of male victims.*³ (Payton J et al 2017). This information the review author feels demonstrates the power the perpetrator felt he had over Claire and Charlotte, and that it needs to be recognised as a gender crime as well.

8.4 There are no current parallel proceedings. The criminal investigation that immediately followed the deaths was completed by the police and all information was provided to HM Coroner for the purpose of an Inquest. The Inquest was held in December 2016, returned verdicts that the victims Claire Hart and Charlotte Hart were unlawfully killed and that Lance Hart took his own life.

9. Background

9.1 At the time of their deaths, Claire Hart and Charlotte Hart were living close to a Lincolnshire market town and up until 4 days before the tragic events, had been living with the perpetrator in the family home. Luke and Ryan were living and working away from the family home at the time. Charlotte had left her university midwifery course during her first year and was due to re-enrol on a teaching undergraduate course in 2016/17. Consequently, at the time of her death she was not in residence on any campus.

9.2 Four days prior to this tragedy taking place, Claire and Charlotte had moved out of the family home in a process that had been carefully orchestrated by Luke and Ryan. This had been planned for several weeks by them together with Claire and Charlotte. All the plans had been carefully concealed from their father. Although friends of Claire's knew that she was planning to leave the perpetrator, the exact facts were kept from everybody until after the date of their

³ Payton J et al in-Dawson M (2017)' Domestic homicides and death reviews' 'an International perspective'. Palgrave

move to their new address which remained anonymous.

9.3 Although they had in fact moved to a rented house, some 6 miles from the family home, the location was temporary. It had been chosen in order that both Claire and Charlotte were not being isolated from friends and work and that the area was safe. Although there had been no physical assaults within the marriage, the location was considered as being far enough away from their father, for them to have control of their environment. Once this move had taken place, their location was not divulged to the perpetrator although it was accepted that in due course he would find out.

9.4 Having discovered that his wife and daughter had left home on July 14th 2016, the perpetrator spent several days apparently plotting to kill his entire family (including Luke and Ryan) in retribution for what he considered to be dishonour and deceit on the part of them all, but moreover that it was his sons who had orchestrated this. It is important to acknowledge here that he had always intended to murder all of them, as is evident within a twelve-page letter (which appears to be a latest draft) which he left on a memory stick, which was recovered following a search of his car after the murders. So, although killing them because they left appears a reaction to this event, it would appear he was always going to do it anyway; it was just a matter of time and place. This letter is discussed in more detail later in this report. The letter is not signed or dated, but the content identifies that it was written in the days immediately following Claire and Charlotte leaving the perpetrator and was addressed "*To whom it may concern*" which may be indicative of the perpetrators intent to kill all of them. He had a year earlier in 2015, when Claire mentioned leaving him, threatened her, and also threatened them that he would burn the house down, which would have killed all of them, to support this theory.

9.5 Although the perpetrator was not aware of where his family had moved to, he appears to have realised that his wife intended to go about her future with some balance of normality. As a consequence, on the morning of July 19th 2016, the perpetrator agreed to meet with Claire at the local leisure centre, knowing that his wife would be using the swimming pool there as she regularly did. This was to exchange paperwork some of which he had of hers and some Claire had inadvertently taken of his. They had planned to meet up later in the day, but it was moved forward to this morning. One of Claire's close friends from work, had told her to be really careful, but Claire thought this location would be safe as it was in a public area. The perpetrator would have been unaware that Charlotte would also have been there.

9.6 The perpetrator drove to the leisure centre and waited for his wife to leave the swimming pool. He had a shotgun and ammunition with him and had shortened the barrel of the gun so as to make it easier to conceal. As Claire and Charlotte left and walked towards their car he came

out of where he was waiting and confronted them. Claire had seen him approaching and had raised her arms indicating that she had seen the weapon; however, he shot them both at close range. Claire was struck in the abdomen and died almost immediately. He re-loaded the weapon and shot Charlotte, before again re-loading and discharging it upon himself with immediate fatal consequences. Whilst being given first aid, Charlotte told a witness that it was her dad who had shot her. She suffered catastrophic injuries and despite efforts to save her died as she was being evacuated to hospital via air ambulance.

9.7 Neither Ryan nor Luke were in the town that day as both were working out of the area. Even before they were notified by the police of the tragedy, social media was overwhelmed with reports concerning the incident and in their hearts; they both knew that it was their mother and sister who had been killed.

9.8 It should also be noted that the horror of the incident was seen by several witnesses, some of whom administered first aid where possible to the victims. The efforts of those individuals should also be commended given the nature and impact of what they had experienced.

9.9 The subsequent post mortems identified that both Claire and Charlotte died as a consequence of severe trauma caused by a single gunshot wound. Both were shot at very close range. The perpetrator died immediately from a self-inflicted gunshot.

9.10 As already mentioned, the Coroner's Inquest held in December 2016, ruled that both Claire and Charlotte were unlawfully killed and that the perpetrator committed suicide.

10. Chronology

10.1 A number of agencies have provided reports to the review. What is apparent from the outset is that little was known about the family dynamics by professionals. Although there is some information on each of the victims and the perpetrator, there is in fact barely any relevant information (to this review) in existence. As already stated earlier most of the information in this review concerning the family has come from the verbal contributions of Luke, Ryan, relatives, friends and work colleagues.

10.2 The GP practice and health records are useful indicators of an underlying history for both of the victims Claire and Charlotte and also the perpetrator, they suffered from a number of illnesses and other longer-term medical issues. None of these would on the face of it, have given any indication to professionals of any behaviour where there was an immediate risk or

implied risk to any family members. There were some minor mental health issues on the part of the perpetrator although there is nothing remarkable within the disclosures made by the respective health professionals concerning these and certainly no clear indication of any domestic abuse.

10.3 On the other hand, the views expressed by both Luke and Ryan, as survivors, paint a completely different picture of the perpetrator. As a father he displayed erratic behaviour and he dominated and controlled the household. Certainly, from the earliest of their memories, he exercised total control over the family yet this did not manifest in any actual physical violence or adverse aggression, rather that his dominance was demonstrated by his undermining behaviours and his egocentric approach to family life. It was his way or no way. The family bowed down to him, although as time progressed the boys became more challenging in their responses to his behaviours.

10.4 In gaining a more definitive background to the events of July 2016, the views of Luke and Ryan, a sister and two close friends and work colleagues of Claire has been critical in obtaining that wider picture. This has cast aside the initial public perceptions and neighbour's views, that Lance Hart gave the impression as being a family man and that he lived for them all. The wider community thought he was a jovial good-natured man. The question why he would commit such an act, when he was apparently such a pleasant and devoted husband and father, was a complete misinterpretation of him and his behaviour, when in fact his single purpose was to isolate and control the family. This exposure of the family history will go some way to gaining a clearer understanding of his controlling and coercive behaviour and how this was masked from an outsider's view.

10.5 The review will refer to Lance Hart primarily as the perpetrator as both Luke and Ryan can only regard him as such. In conversation with the author they rarely referenced him as their father. He rarely presented to them what they would expect a father to be rather that his attitude towards them was resentful. In particular as they both became extremely high achievers academically and as they matured, they were able to distance themselves from him both intellectually and physically. This it seems, only served to create a bigger chasm between them.

10.6 At the same time, their love and respect for their mother and sister was immense. They stated that; *"Charlotte and our mum were our inspiration and purpose in life"* *"They were angels"* (a comment repeated to the authors by others) and this quote simply emphasises their resolve to move their mother away from what they described as being the *"suffocating grip"* of their father. They regret not having made this decision some years ago, but felt that the timing as it was, was right for their mother who they considered was now strong enough to forge her

own independence.

10.7 It would not be an understatement to identify that there was significant dislike for their father, but that this turned deeper for the manner with which he treated each and all of them. It seems that no matter how hard they made effort to ameliorate his attitudes and beliefs, he would find ways of turning this on its head and placing the onus of blame for problems within the marriage on them and Ryan in particular. He always had to be the victim, when in fact he was anything but the victim. As they matured into adulthood, those divisions only served to become more emphasised.

10.8 The perpetrator attempted to drive Claire and Charlotte away from Luke and Ryan, when they went to university, and then later embarked on their respective careers as his control of them was much easier without his sons' presence at home.

10.9 Looking back into the early life of Claire and the perpetrator, he had previously been married before he met Claire although that marriage is reported by members of his family as *"not having lasted very long"*. He was seven years older than Claire. It is suggested that when they first met, he took Claire on holiday and throwing away her contraceptive pills he informed her that *"you will be having my child"*.

10.10 They initially resided in the small Cambridgeshire market town of March, moving into a large house which he extended. At the time Claire worked as a chef, for which she was professionally trained, in a nearby public house. She became pregnant with Luke in 1989, having only been together a short while and married the following year after he was born.

10.11 One of Claire's sisters, who lived in the area, spent time with her during the early part of her relationship with the perpetrator, supporting her during her pregnancy with Luke who was born before they had married. At that time the perpetrator spent most of the week working away from home as a civil engineer. He would regularly 'phone Claire at home and if her sister answered the call, it was clear that he had no time for her and insisted on speaking to Claire in a tone that was usually *"dismissive and unfriendly."*

10.12 When he returned home towards the end of the week, he would make Claire's sister feel immediately uncomfortable and dismiss her without any appreciation for supporting Claire in his absence. His life and that of Claire was dominated by his calendar and schedule. If it wasn't on his calendar or agenda, it didn't happen. He was always in control of the finances and Claire was given little or no independence in that respect from the beginning of their relationship.

10.13 In what was described as a strange and unanticipated move, in the early 1990's the

perpetrator sold their house in March and moved the family into a semi-rural location at a village outside of Wisbech. This came as a great surprise to Claire's family as it only served to isolate the family, and to make regular or casual contact with them became more difficult due to the distance and location that he chose. At that time Claire and the perpetrator had two close friends whom lived nearby but it later transpired that not even they knew about the house-move and they lost contact with them. The inference overall is that Claire had no say in this move and was unhappy in their new home as she became isolated, not being able to walk into town or meet up with her friends and other young mothers. That did not seem to bother the perpetrator in the least and endorsed his control of the relationship. It is now clear to Luke and Ryan that he made this move to isolate the family to give him more control.

10.14 The perpetrator, although not reported as being fascinated by weapons, kept several shot-guns as a registered shotgun holder, one of which a relative describes as being of Spanish origin, double barrelled of 'over and under' construction. He had several 'similar' shotguns and they were kept in the cupboard at the bottom of the stairs and later moved into a secure cabinet. When the family later moved to the Spalding area, he surrendered his certificate and the weapons, although how many weapons he had at that time is unclear. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he also held weapons that he was not lawfully authorised to do so. Relatives are convinced that the weapon he used in July 2016 was one already in his possession.

10.15 Claire's sister and her partner both stated that although they were able to retain some contact with the family when they moved from March, it was apparent that from very early in her marriage Claire had no freedom of choice and this pattern accentuated and extended to the family as each child was born. The perpetrator made all the decisions and would have little time for the relatives, although he would not turn them away from the home, they describe to the review author that they did not feel to be welcomed with open arms. Claire's sister told the review author that *"Claire was my big sister. I loved her unconditionally; she was my hero growing up. Claire was such a lady she was beautiful, elegant and caring. Born to be a mother and she gave her all to it. Growing up she was my protector making sure to keep me out of harm's way and when the boys and Charlotte came along she became theirs. She was one very special lady, my true friend from birth"*

10.16 Luke spoke of the fact that he is allergic to peanuts and that their move to the village from March was made shortly after he had suffered a major anaphylactic reaction to peanuts. Claire's sister does in fact make the incident much clearer in that she states that she in fact witnessed the perpetrator spoon peanut butter into Luke's mouth knowing that he was likely to have an allergic reaction and he had to be rushed to accident and emergency for treatment. Claire and her sister never had a conversation about the perpetrators actions that caused this to happen.

10.17 In what was quite a shocking endorsement of the perpetrators attitude, an Aunt on comment to the review author, is in no doubt that when Ryan was born he was resented by his father. This is exemplified and is described in more detail in the chilling letter written by the perpetrator to his family, when his discordant language towards Ryan above all others is apparent. When queried by the author with relatives, it is suggested that Ryan was not 'planned' and being born in relatively short time after Luke, this did not fit in with the perpetrators plans, which is what everything had to do in that family.

10.18 Ironically it appears that the perpetrator wanted to ensure that his children received a good education. Although the inference was that the family moved to the Spalding area for that purpose, there was in fact ample transport opportunities for the schools in question available locally to where they were living at that time and there was no need for the family to have moved. The wider family believe that this house move typified the perpetrators need to ensure that he maintained control of the family and was able to further isolate them by doing this and that the schooling of the children was the excuse, rather than the truth. It is important to note that this did have an impact on Claire and the accessibility to her by her family and friends which became more sporadic as a direct consequence.

10.19 It is important to broaden this perspective by examining the effects that these events had on Luke, Ryan and Charlotte and to narrate their views in looking at the family history. Both the young men spoke from the heart of their love for their mother and sister but also for their utter contempt of their father and his inflexibility and intolerant attitudes. His behaviour was of complete opposites to that of their mother and he showed little or no love or emotion other than for himself. Although Claire suffered from cervical cancer, from which she had made a full recovery, and she was also diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, the perpetrators illnesses were always of more importance than any others and this was a point he emphasised throughout. The perpetrator made an outburst to Luke and Ryan over a mealtime when they were discussing their mother's health when he commented; *"Do you know what it's like having a wife who's got cancer"*, which was aimed at creating a sympathetic approach to him, rather than for concern for his wife.

10.20 During the time that they resided at the village near Wisbech, both Luke and Ryan stated that their father never came to any school or social events that they or Charlotte participated in. This perpetuated to their time at secondary school, where all three of them were high achievers, they frequently received accolades, participated also in sports at a very high national level but their father never supported them or attended as a spectator or in a parental capacity. This was left solely to their mother. The perpetrator did attend their respective graduation ceremonies; however, this was not out of respect or pride for them rather he treated this as being a "showcase" for him. He masqueraded as the archetypal proud

parent for the photographs but although both achieved first class honours degrees, he gave no praise for their achievements.

10.21 When asked about friendships during their childhood, both Luke and Ryan said that although they sort of had friends at school, they rarely went to their friends' homes as this would have meant that in turn they would have friends to come to theirs. The perpetrator did not allow them to have friends in the house. The same applied to Charlotte who of the three of them had the most friends and was very popular in school; she also didn't have friends visit her at home. The perpetrator would ensure that the family meal times were synchronised to the time that they would arrive home from school. For example, if the perpetrator said tea was at 4.10pm, it would be and there was no exception to this rule and if they walked in late from the bus home, they would have to eat their food cold.

10.22 Much of the perpetrators behaviour followed a hypocritical pattern. For example, he became outwardly obsessed with his health following the diagnosis of his prostate cancer, which was around 2009. He sought a diet of foods providing anti-oxidants yet failed to balance this with a healthy lifestyle. Both Luke and Ryan stated that his needs became paramount and even the family's food had to be tailored to his requirements. This behaviour is also reflected in an IMR from mental health professionals who note that he considered himself to be; *"Meticulous and organised"* which according to his medical records was a foundation based on the diagnosis of prostate cancer, where he *'lived by very a rigid calendar in order to feel in control of his life'*. The record goes further in that in 2012 it indicates that he spoke little of his family and stated in consultation that he was *'invariably avoidant of people, especially his family'*.

10.23 The perpetrators background provided by his relatives identifies that he was brought up in a home that was patriarchal and that his mother was subservient. The review has found nothing else in relation to the perpetrators background that would indicate why he would behave and offend like he did against his family.

10.24 The perpetrator would regularly 'fall-out' with members of the family, it appears in particular those on Claire's side of the family, however they were in no way unique to his erratic and intransigent perspective that he was 'always right'. In many ways the perception was that if he wasn't listened to he would take action to counter the opposing view and if that meant ostracising people, whether friends, family or work colleagues, it made no difference.

10.25 An example of this was when Charlotte was taken by her father to Australia alongside her paternal grandmother specifically to attend a family wedding. Claire did not accompany them. However, the perpetrator fell out with members of the family ahead of the wedding on a minor issue concerning personal hygiene. He then refused to attend the wedding and he took

Charlotte travelling preventing her from being at the wedding as well. Both Luke and Ryan indicate that such behaviour by the perpetrator was by no means unusual in that he would frequently 'burn bridges' with family and as a consequence he would prohibit them from communicating with those family members and refuse to allow them into their home (albeit Claire's sister says she wasn't ever prevented from being allowed in the home, the atmosphere was bad).

10.26 Claire's close family describe her as having a caring concern for people, who enjoyed company, work and friendship and a loving person who lived for her sons and daughter. She had worked at a local supermarket for about ten years and was respected as an integral member of the team in the department that she worked. Claire had become noticeably different in the months leading up to her tragic death and although her friends and work colleagues were aware that she was intending to leave the perpetrator, she did not reveal any direct plans to them, until it was just about to happen.

10.27 When she was visited at home by friends, the perpetrator would be dismissive of those visitors, yet would ensure that he sat where he could overhear the conversations taking place, making both Claire and the visitors uncomfortable. On occasions when he attended functions with Claire, he was described as "*Wearing a mask*" that to the uninitiated he would appear as friendly and pleasant yet not wanting to be there and he was frequently seen to be uncomfortable in company and keen to leave as soon as was possible.

10.28 Luke and Ryan both speak of the perpetrator's paranoia concerning the family finances. They supported themselves through University, but on the occasions that they returned home, the perpetrator would charge them a daily fee to live at their home. This doubled when they both started work, but they would still travel home to be with the family. Luke commented. "*He thought he owned us, we were his investment*" he went on to say, "*We weren't physically abused, just emotionally. It was always on his terms, never ours*"

10.29 They go on to state that what the outside world saw of them was that they were three healthy and intelligent children and that for that reason there was never attention drawn to them as a family despite the dysfunction permeated by their father.

10.30 The perpetrator would give little or no money to Claire but would rely on her to put the family's needs first providing food and clothing for the children from her wages. He restricted her finances to the extent that he managed all of her income, syphoning money that he considered was necessary for such expenditure as on-line gambling and restraining cash from her in order to hide it. The financial restraints meant that she was unable to have much spare cash for herself, but she would always place the family first and was totally selfless in that regard. On the other hand, if the perpetrator wanted something it would be his prerogative. He

hid her passport when she sought to travel to see Ryan compete outside of the UK in a triathlon.

10.31 The perpetrator was the same with money towards the boys and also Charlotte. Her brothers and her friends describe a time when a dog of theirs was not well and he wouldn't give her the money to take the dog to the vet. Charlotte was extremely upset by this and had to try and get the dog treated herself. The dog was in a great deal of pain and was 'put down'. The perpetrator exercised further financial control against Charlotte by insisting and knowing all of her internet banking details and passwords.

10.32 The perpetrator didn't trust banks which was only emphasised further following the banking crisis and later the fact that a considerable amount of what he considered to be his inheritance from his family, was spent caring for his mother whom had dementia. He hid relatively large sums of cash away in the house and invested in 'Bitcoins' but at the same time not allowing Claire any access to the money. He was also known to give the coins away and according to Luke this was to "random individuals" including people that he communicated with on line. When Claire found where he had hidden the money and took half of it he begged her to return it to him for safekeeping even though he acknowledged that it was hers by right. She returned the cash to him for 'safekeeping' against the wishes of her sons. The perpetrator laid the blame for her taking the cash at Ryan and this was a significant feature of his letter.

10.33 Luke and Ryan described that as time progressed the perpetrator would avoid friendships as he had a problem building and keeping relationships. He would rely on his 'virtual reality' or on-line 'friends' and spent a considerable time on his computer where he researched issues and drew significant if not irrelevant conclusions on a wide variety of subjects. As stated earlier in this report, he would gamble on line and purchase items that the family did not need. Search engines and forums became his world.

10.34 Claire had stopped wearing her wedding ring and had consulted with Citizens Advice (both Luke and Ryan were unaware this had happened and when this information was checked out by the review author, Citizen Advice⁴ have no record of any visit across the whole of the South Holland area) and a solicitor within the preceding 6 months. Her friends report that the perpetrator was clearly aware that something was wrong and he was seen to have followed her to work on occasions and observed her during her breaks from the shop floor. On occasions, he would take her to work ensuring that she went directly there and back when she had the use of her own transport. He would also examine her mobile phone, checking her call history. He was

⁴ Citizen Advice in this area does operate a drop-in session for victims of DA (not sure in operation in July 2016). They have also run pilot projects in relation to DA and due to the success of these; this is being rolled out across the country.

also known to have made phone calls to persons in her call history during the early hours of the morning to see who would answer the phone and a work colleague reports one such call at 3 am from Claire's mobile phone.

11. Overview

11.1 In analysing the agency information concerning the family, the majority of the background is provided by health professionals, in particular the GP practice where the family was registered.

11.2 Claire suffered from multiple sclerosis which was diagnosed in 2003. It is of interest to note that she did not tell her siblings the full extent of her illness other than to indicate that she had multiple sclerosis. This characteristic of Claire appears to typify her need to ensure that there was minimal outside influence, even from her closest family but by providing an element of insight she deflected any significant curiosity. At the same time this meant that the support that she perhaps needed outside of her immediate family was not able to be forthcoming.

11.3 She had cervical cancer in 2006 and responded to treatment. She suffered more latterly (diagnosed in 2013) from trigeminal neuralgia, a chronic severe facial pain, for which she had repeated treatment. This was not however indicative of any origin from an assault and indeed throughout her consultations with her GP Practice, which was also the family's practice, there was no mention by her of domestic abuse, nor on the other hand was she asked on any occasion if this was the case.

11.4 Between June 2012 and August 2015, Claire had 44 consultations with the practice, the majority of these were in connection with the neuralgia for which she was prescribed painkillers and was referred to a specialist.

11.5 Between August 2015 and July 2016, Claire had 18 visits to her GP, the greater proportion of which were urinary related and attributed to her multiple sclerosis. She was referred to specialists on a number of occasions.

11.6 Her most recent consultation prior to her death was on the 13th June 2016, where she attended her GP with symptoms of anxiety and what she believed was an irregular heartbeat. The examination proved unremarkable but at no time was she asked about or did she indicate any domestic abuse or fear of domestic abuse, although she attributed the worsening of her trigeminal neuralgia to "*some marital stress*". She had agreed to make a further visit should her symptoms continue. The GP may have asked her overtly what this marital stress was about, but there is nothing recorded if this conversation occurred.

11.7 Other than some post-natal symptoms following the birth of Charlotte in 1997, there was no other indication in healthcare records of treatment for depression.

11.8 Charlotte Hart was just 19 years old at the time of her death. She had left her university course in early 2016 as she was unhappy with her choice of further education and she was suffering from anxiety. Her resolve was to in fact re-enrol on another degree course in the following academic year and train as a teacher.

11.9 Charlotte's medical history is again unremarkable in that between June 2012 and August 2015, she had 8 appointments of no significance. Between August 2015 and July 2016 her records indicate that she attended in February 2016 suffering panic attacks and had ideations of self-harm but had not hurt herself at any time. She was referred and seen at accident and emergency by the mental health crisis team and was prescribed beta blockers. It was about this time that she gave up her university placement and in May 2016 she was prescribed some anti-depressant medication although she had no further consultations following this. Charlotte alluded to there being some "*problems at home*" in the May 2016 consultation although this appeared not to have been explored further by the GP.

11.10 The perpetrator Lance Hart had a more complex medical history by comparison with the victims as the GP Practice IMR indicates that he had a 'higher than average attendance'. The conditions that he received treatment for were Prostate cancer, for which he had successful surgery, musculoskeletal issues, and dermatological conditions. He also had recorded recurrent symptoms of anxiety and depression dating from as far back as 1986. On several of those occasions, he was prescribed anti-depressant medication. The GP's notes suggest that his emotional symptoms related to "*responses to stressful events in his life*". He was referred to the Community Mental Health Team in 2010.

11.11 In June 2012, he attended with depressive symptoms and described low mood over the previous months, poor concentration, poor self-esteem, lack of motivation and frequent weeping. He indicated that he was isolating himself from the rest of the family due to arguments although there was no elaboration. He was prescribed anti-depressant medication.

11.12 Between June 2012 and August 2015, he attended for treatment for low mood in June 2012, December 2014 depression that he indicated were as a consequence of his elderly mother's dementia and in August 2015 anxiety and insomnia for which he was prescribed anti-anxiety medication.

11.13 On the 24th May 2016, the perpetrator saw his GP and described being extremely anxious and '*having problems with his wife and children*'. The diagnosis was of depression, but he did

not appear to be suicidal. The issues concerning his family were not explored further during the consultation.

11.14 His last note records a repeat prescription for anti-depressant medication dated 12th July 2016.

11.15 Although providing a comprehensive IMR, the police have confirmed that nothing was known concerning the family in respect of domestic abuse or other potentially related incidents. They had not come to notice as a family or as individuals other than a minor incident in July 2015 when the perpetrator came into contact with police officers responding to an incident involving his mother and related to her dementia. There is no detail of the occurrence within the police report other than a note that identifies at the time that the perpetrator had a “*Bad attitude*” and was asked to leave the location of the incident. This incident resulted in his mother being taken to a place of safety under the Mental Health Act, however there is no other information concerning the perpetrator and this incident appearing in other agency records.

11.16 The weapon that was used by the perpetrator was ‘prepared’ specifically for use on the victims in the days leading to their deaths. The barrel and butt of the weapon were recovered during a search of the perpetrators home following the murders and indicated recent ‘preparation’.

11.17 It has not been possible to identify the origin of the weapon, despite extensive enquiries. The gun had its serial number erased. On the basis of what the police have established and the information from the family of the victims and perpetrator, it is more than likely that the weapon had been in the perpetrators possession for a number of years, possibly dating back to when he was authorised to hold shotguns and that he had retained this weapon unlawfully.

11.18 The Lincolnshire Community Health Services IMR indicates that there was no information leading to any concerns in respect of any of the subjects of the review.

11.19 The United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust indicates that there were a number of attendances at hospitals by both Claire Hart and the perpetrator. Of those attendances by Claire, one in October 2014 was a knee injury sustained falling over her dog and after examination she was discharged. She attended alone. In February 2013, she attended with the perpetrator with ‘stomach pain’. She was assessed alone and was discharged with a diagnosis of constipation. The attendances were otherwise unremarkable and are cross referred to referrals to the GP practice records. Because the presenting symptoms were consistent with the accounts provided, there was no cause to suspect maltreatment or any additional concerns.

11.20 Northampton University has stated that they have no relevant pastoral or tutorial information concerning Charlotte as a student however this may be due to the fact that her studies were limited to little more than a single trimester and she was not as yet, well known by her tutor in view of the short time span of those studies.

12. Analysis

12.1 Given the lack of information from agencies, it has not been possible for the review author to answer some of the specific TOR set for this review at the outset. However, a lot of learning has still been extracted from the information, combined with the information, from family, friends and colleagues.

12.2 The behaviours on the part of the perpetrator had been taking place for nearly 30 years. His despotic and omnipotent perspective on life coupled with his paranoia led to his total domination of the household but because of the lack of violence, the family felt powerless against him and endured his behaviour in the belief that they would eventually overcome this. The Home Office in 2013 stated that *'There appears to be gaps in awareness and understanding of what constitutes domestic violence and abuse. A key misunderstanding is that domestic violence only means physical violence. There are also some examples where financial and emotional abuse is not regarded as forms of domestic violence. A clear understanding of domestic violence and abuse is important as in many of the cases there was evidence of domestic abuse incidents prior to the homicide. There have also been reports where the power and control aspects of domestic violence have not been recognised'* (Home Office 2013⁵). Luke and Ryan told the review author that they didn't think at the time that they were living in a domestic abuse household because of this lack of physical violence. It wasn't known to them that this was domestic abuse until after the deaths had taken place.

12.3 Although family and friends were aware of the perpetrators skewed vision of life, the fact that he was not physically violent masked the control that he exercised and what the reality was actually like for Claire, Luke, Ryan and Charlotte as they spoke little of this. It was their 'problem', nobody else's and they became conditioned to this. The family became a 'closed book' to others and gave little away, caring to support each other and becoming a closely bonded unit keeping the perpetrator at arm's length and attempting to wear away his dominance as time progressed.

⁵ Home Office (2013) Domestic Homicide Reviews: Common Themes Identified as Lessons to be Learned.

12.4 Although giving the impression of being a proud father when his first child Luke was born, it appears that Claire having fallen pregnant again in a relatively short time after Luke was born; this became a catalyst for the resentment of his second child. Why this was the case is not clear, yet it is a matter brought to the review author's attention by members of the family that any 'open' discontent was often directed towards Ryan. The divisions between Luke and the perpetrator also became more obvious as time went on.

12.5 The perpetrator didn't seem to realise that his behaviour, was domestic abuse that was so coercive and controlling. He said in his note *'yes we bickered but it was not serious, it was normal marriage stuff, no violence or threats of violence of handling of each other, just words, so fairly normal I would imagine.'* He wrote further his thoughts on his behaviour *'I have never threatened Claire, never grabbed her or assaulted her, it's not in my nature, I am animated in expressing myself, I shoot from the hip and say stuff to get it out in the open as I don't like things festering, surely that's better than physical violence.'* As this overview report has highlighted so far, the quality of Claire, Charlotte, Luke and Ryan's life by his behaviour was as abusive both emotionally and psychologically as any physical violence.

12.6 Growing up within this family was different from what might be expected of an ordinary family to experience. The abuse seems to have been so embedded that the family did not recognise or define their experiences as being domestic abuse. The fact that their mother gave the children so much love and support probably negated much of the perpetrators behaviour and they became somewhat immune to it, living for the love of one parent. Katz (2016) in her article about children's experiences of coercive control states *'Children in coercive control-based domestic violence contexts may live with narrow space for action, reduced 'voice' within the family, disempowerment and erosion of their confidence'*⁶. There is no doubt in the review authors mind that this is what happened to Luke, Ryan and Charlotte as they were growing up.

12.7 To a greater extent, Ryan and Luke, due principally to their professions, were able to be away from the family environment and were able to distance themselves from the perpetrator. They could have chosen to have completely removed themselves from the situation but chose to maintain good contact with their mother and sister. They continued to give them the support that they felt was needed by travelling home as much as their jobs allowed. This time away from their father gave them the opportunity to begin to plan a new life for their mother.

12.8 The anxiety suffered by Charlotte leading to her giving up her university studies cannot be traced back definitively to the abuse from her father. The information that Charlotte sent the University as to why she wanted to change courses doesn't mention this at all. In fact, gives a

⁶ Katz E (2016) Beyond the physical incident model: how children living with domestic violence are harmed by and resist regimes of coercive control. Child abuse review volume 25 46-59 (2016)

differing medical reason. What is apparent however is that she and her mother were very close in the time between her leaving her course and her tragic death and supported each other, in many ways. There is little doubt that there was an association between Charlotte's anxiety and panic attacks and her comments made to the GP in May 2016 admitting that there were *"problems at home"*. By this time, she would have been aware of her sibling's arrangements for her and her mother and coupled with her personal issues, this was a very difficult time for her.

12.9 Charlotte had told friends that although she didn't love her dad, she didn't want to give up on him. Her brothers and her friends say this typifies what a lovely person she was, and that she tried to bring out the best in everyone. Even though the abuse she suffered by her father was there throughout her life, and continued into adulthood, she didn't want to give up on him. Charlotte did have a boyfriend at the time of her death, and they had managed to share a holiday not long before she died. He didn't engage with the review; however, his views are reflected in this review due to his input with the coroner's investigation.

12.10 The perpetrators letter, left on a memory stick, starts with a chilling resolve. In this he immediately cites Ryan as the catalyst; *"Well Ryan, you have got what you wished for but unfortunately this was not what you expected, me neither. I enjoyed life but I suppose this could be a lesson for others to get along and talk about what's troubling them"*.

12.11 It is clear from the tone of the letter that the perpetrator admits that he had made mistakes but he swiftly moves the blame for any of his actions to Luke, Ryan, and in part to Charlotte. The picture that he paints within this letter is that he is not to blame but that the loss of his wife by their deceit will not allow her or him to live. His intentions are clear and the letter, although at times rambling, paints a picture of a man who considers that he is in fact the victim and that he has been the one pushed out and away from the family. He emphasises his love for Claire but expresses the view that Luke and Ryan had driven a wedge between them and that as a consequence he had nowhere to turn to and that the final outcome was already beyond doubt.

12.12 The note is quite chilling in that he narrates his final *"favourite meal"* as his *"last supper"*. He states, *"My feelings inside are it's as if my whole family and dogs have been in a car accident and all died. Not a good place to be but then I think who caused the crash? I want revenge too"*. It is without doubt that he formed his intentions and would carry them out and if not to kill all of them, take away the future for the survivors.

12.13 His comments concerning the sudden impact of the removal of Claire from him echoes his need to be in control of her. *"So, I hope you enjoyed the laughs and high fives when your scheme worked"*. The letter seems to indicate a man who is expressing his desire to remain in control and to ensure that this legacy is endured by the survivors.

12.14 There is research that highlights that at the time and immediately afterwards of any separation there is an escalation of the risk of harm. The Women's Aid report 'Nineteen Child Homicides' (2016) highlights this risk *'The point at which a survivor leaves an abusive partner is a significantly dangerous time for her and her children. 76% (16 out of 21) of homicides by a partner or ex-partner reviewed in a 2003 report involved separation. A recent study with domestic abuse service-users in London found that 88% of women (out of 72 women) had experienced some form of post-separation abuse.'*⁷ This research and this review into the deaths of Claire and Charlotte mean that it is important to highlight this risk much more widely.

13. Conclusions

13.1 The insight offered by the immediate family and friends of both the victims and the perpetrator has been a crucial and significant contribution to this review. It is important to identify that the contribution of those individuals has been of immense value given the tragic circumstances and the trauma suffered by them individually and collectively. The relatives and friends have been directed to support services and the police investigation ensured that appropriate support was offered from specialist trained officers, for Luke and Ryan.

13.2 Claire, Charlotte, Luke and Ryan endured an enormous amount of attrition at the hands of the perpetrator. Claire's strength to have lived with this was courageous and clearly made for the love of all her children whom she shielded for many years. There were times when she would arrive at home, sit in her car crying, summoning up the strength to go in and carry on the life with the perpetrator. To live as she did with this as a perpetual feature of her life is incomprehensible as we have not been able to hear her or Charlotte's voice other than through Luke, Ryan other friends and family. Luke and Ryan do however truly represent their mother and sister and as professionals we have a responsibility to ensure that their voices continue to be heard through them.

13.3 The deaths of Claire and Charlotte is a tragedy and it has deprived two young men who were developing their careers, of a future with them both, that they were attempting to build away from the influence of the perpetrator, but still as a family unit. This will have an enduring effect upon them; however, their resolve is to ensure that the deaths of their mother and sister can be highlighted in order to assist others in identifying the signs of this coercive and controlling behaviour in relationships, not just for victims but also for professionals. They do not want us to regard them purely as victims but moreover as 'Heroes and Angels' for enduring

⁷ "Women's Aid, Nineteen Child Homicides (Bristol: Women's Aid, 2016)"

the abuse from the perpetrator.

13.4 In understanding what coercive control is, the legislation is in its infancy and remains a slow process of understanding by agencies and professionals. This confusion perhaps goes some way to explain why it is still primarily physical acts of violence that are focused upon in response to domestic abuse. The change in the law in December 2015 shows that there is still a considerable way to go in ensuring that there is a wider understanding to what is controlling behaviour and coercive control and that professionals and the community need to be better equipped to read between the lines.

13.5 Coercive control is not primarily a crime of violence but it is firstly and foremost what Stark (2007) describes as a liberty crime⁸. Stark provides a detailed breakdown of the behaviours that comprise coercive control, some of which fits perfectly the actions and behaviour of the perpetrator in this case: 'Intimidation (including threats, surveillance, stalking, degradation and shaming), Isolation (including from family, friends and the world outside the home); and Control (including control of family resources and 'micromanagement' of everyday life'). What has been seen is that there has been no apparent violence within the relationship but that what Claire in particular experienced, was an environment in which she was constantly monitored, belittled and beset by an ever-changing set of rules, determined by the perpetrator. This behaviour by the perpetrator was rigorously enforced as such that Claire had no life even outside of his actual control, as even her time was ruled by her need to satisfy his demands and accede to him. He was in ultimate control and when that control was removed from him he responded with fatal consequences such was his own belief in his dominance and what he felt was the betrayal by his wife and children.

13.6 Claire's escape mechanism seems only to have been a temporary release, however, when she was at work and Claire could participate in banter with her colleagues who were also her closest friends and confidants. In fact, the team at work operated with Claire together as almost a family, and must have been the one area, other than her children, of comfort to her. However even they were unable to perhaps understand the level of oppression that she faced daily.

13.7 Historically, domestic abuse has been translated as generally being an incident or incidents of violence or progressive behaviour targeted against the victim. This case only emphasises how controlling and coercive behaviour is cleverly concealed and where the victims become conditioned into the understanding that this is normal and where the cycle of oppression

⁸ Stark, E., Coercive control. The entrapment of women in personal life. (U.S.A: Oxford University Press, 2007)

cannot be broken.

13.8 It is well documented that a staggering amount of domestic abuse can take place before people report it or have the courage to come forward. This is not just on the part of the victims but also family and friends and this case emphasises the need to ensure that agencies broaden their approach to tackling this abuse. Practitioners need to make informed judgements concerning both individuals and families. Professionals need to be empowered within a culture that encourages further insight, discussion and supports referrals outside of the respective organisation in order to raise concerns. As an example, the review author feels there were three occasions (one each for Claire, Charlotte and the perpetrator) when the GP could have asked explicitly what they meant by 'Marital strife' or 'problems at home'. Albeit the answer may not have been what the GP (if not fully conversant with coercive behaviour) would understand as domestic abuse.

13.9 Why did this tragedy occur is embedded in the psyche of the perpetrator and the catastrophic consequences were not foreseen by anybody, least of all the family. The perpetrator had no underlying history of violence, no criminal record and had not made any threats that could have been construed to have pointed towards such an outcome. Having never been the focus of any agencies interest, he could have on one hand regarded himself as above the law and carried on with impunity or on the other hand as he says in his letter he did not see that his behaviour was wrong? However, whichever way he looked at this his behaviour was probably outside the law and bad for his family, and as mentioned earlier his behaviour towards them, and the subsequent killing of the two females in his family, can be described as him carrying out gender-based crime.

13.10 Why the family were unable to seek support manifests itself in that their understanding of domestic abuse was that violence within the relationships would or indeed must be the determining factor, but that this had never occurred. It seems that they were 'conditioned' from an early age and emotionally bonding with an abuser is a well-documented strategy for survival of victims of abuse and intimidation.

13.11 In 2015, some 12 months before the tragic events and without any recognition of the psychological significance that the perpetrator would have felt by being told by Claire that she was intending to leave him; none of the family would have understood the additional risks that this would have presented to them all. The fact that the perpetrator was able to manipulate the family into believing that he would change was probably the catalyst to his intentions in that he knew that his control was being challenged. Evidence from the homicide investigation, through the letter written by the perpetrator identified that he was preparing to kill members of the family several months before the tragic events.

13.12 When asked what they would do *now*, set against the back-drop of the tragedy and could they have sought outside support, both Luke and Ryan acknowledge that their concept of abuse was that there *must be* an element of violence. Even when the perpetrator threatened to burn the house down in June 2015, when Claire said that she was planning on leaving him, they did not take this seriously enough but the perpetrator then contrived to re-assure them all that he would change, but this did not last and in fact heightened the risks to them all.

13.13 There was no thought that they could take anything to the police or other agencies, it was what they considered, their problem, nobody else's. This concept in itself is a tragedy and perhaps indicative of how interventions and resolutions still have a significant way to go despite the changes in the law. This emphasises the need for further publicity and practitioner events.

13.14 Luke and Ryan both expressed views that the media also have a hand to play in concepts and understanding of domestic abuse. In the days following the deaths of their mother and sister, the perpetrator was described as being a "nice guy". Ryan comments that "*I was shocked at the ease with which others could explain our tragedy away within an afternoon*" and *expressed concern that such a concept may only serve to re-enforce in the abuser's mind that what they are doing is okay*". His view and that is endorsed by Luke is that the media need to have a better understanding of what constitutes domestic abuse or the perceptions become skewed and victims won't get the support that they need. They have since been able to put their story forward so that the sensationalism of reporting by the media which was originally portrayed in the immediacy of the murders is put right with the facts.

14. Lessons learned

Learning Themes

- Knowledge of coercive and controlling behaviour
 - i) By Professionals
 - ii) General Public
 - iii) Perpetrators
- Heightened risk of harm at time of or immediately after separation
- GP's to ask overtly about DA
- Coercive and controlling Behaviour is harmful to children growing up in that environment.

14.1 Although controlling and coercive behaviour is now embedded within domestic abuse definitions, it appears to be the least understood aspect of the overall domestic abuse and safeguarding legislation and where all professionals need to think wider and seek to explore individuals with greater curiosity. Front-line practitioners in particular need to be more alert to the signs and symptoms of these behaviours and be able to highlight possible triggers and subtle inferences and make appropriate referrals.

14.2 What this case highlights is that professionals do need to explore issues in order to satisfactorily 'understand comments made. It may well be the case that both Claire and Charlotte gave subtle hints about their experiences to health professionals, but that there was no questioning concerning disclosures. For example, the comment concerning "*some marital stress*" as alluded to by Claire in 2016. What did this mean? Should and indeed could practitioners have delved deeper into this at that time.

14.3 Comments made by the perpetrator were also never explored. For example, when on the 24th May 2016, the perpetrator saw his GP and seemed to be '*extremely anxious*' and stated that he was '*having problems with his wife and children*' more details could have been established to identify what he meant and this is acknowledged by the respective IMR. The diagnosis was depression, but he did not appear to be suicidal. The issues concerning his family were not explored further during the consultation

14.4 There were earlier indications in 2012 of a behavioural pattern when the perpetrator said that he was "*isolating himself from the rest of the family because of arguments*".

14.5 It must be identified that further questioning would have been unlikely to have revealed any intentions on the part of the perpetrator at that time but exemplifies that exploration of comments that are rooted in the home should not be overlooked and is an opportunity to discuss different behaviours that the individual may be experiencing but may not have considered as abuse before.

14.6 The work colleagues of Claire have indicated that they too could have spoken up for her, but at the same time their understanding of domestic abuse was not clear. Equally a point was made that "*If it's not happening to you, you don't see it in others*", unless there is some physical manifestation such as injuries or emotional and personality changes. They felt that there needs to be more publicity and greater understanding of controlling and coercive behaviour or else they become just words without a clear understanding of how outsiders may help or raise concerns to third parties. The place where Claire worked did not have in place a work place

policy for dealing with domestic abuse⁹. They do have a phone contact available to all employees called 'Retail Hub' that staff can contact and this includes for advice about DA. Her closest work colleagues and friends made a point of stating that *"It's not what you can see, it's the hurt that you can't see"*. Perhaps that comment sums up this tragedy in quite a simple yet profound way.

14.7 As professionals, there is a duty to ensure that this tragedy endured by the victims and survivors isn't forgotten and that others whom may be suffering a similar life can get help. Practitioners should never avoid asking what may be ordinarily considered as being the difficult questions, discussing those concerns with other practitioners and colleagues and giving a 'second opinion' or a fresh set of eyes to an issue.

14.8 As highlighted earlier in this review, the risk at the point or immediate aftermath of separation needs to be much more generally known.

14.9 The research by Katz as highlighted earlier in this review in relation to the harm suffered by children living in this coercive control family environment must not be underestimated by all professionals.

14.10 The partnership in Lincolnshire have already carried out a good level of awareness raising and training, in relation to controlling and coercive behaviour for example Lincolnshire Police and LPFT have been using some of the products already in place nationally.

- Guidance for MARACs – circulated at the time (early 2016)
- Lincs Police leaflet designed in-house shared extensively internally, across all staff, and also with partner agencies. It has been shared through the DA Delivery Group at partnership level. A briefing pack has also been designed for use in force with officers – Lincolnshire Police officers were provided this briefing in line with the legislation going live. This was through their shift briefings, staff seminars and events on the internal website.
- Case studies from the CPS VAWG report in 2016 for use in local safeguarding.
- Home Office statutory guidance framework. I agreed to let the author know that LPFT have safeguarding information leaflets that refer to and describe coercion and control as a behaviour of domestic abuse and psychological abuse. It is also well described in policy, procedure and training for Trust staff.

⁹ HO VAWG strategy 2016-2020 *'Employers have a critical role in both identifying abuse and developing robust workplace policies to support employees who may be victims of violence, abuse or stalking. Over 60 companies have signed up to the Domestic Abuse Responsibility Pledge promoted by the joint Health and Work Unit and the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence. We will continue to encourage employers to make this important pledge to raise awareness of domestic violence and abuse in the workplace.'*

- LPFT has 83 safeguarding champions and the Trust's safeguarding lead led a session on domestic abuse, highlighting coercion and control. Currently the safeguarding lead is visiting all the Trust teams and holding listening events to try and promote professional curiosity in domestic abuse, to understand what prevents staff from identifying domestic abuse and to promote understanding and knowledge of coercion and control.
- In addition, there is planned the commissioning of a campaign for the public to better understand coercion and control across NHS locations and services.

They and their partners on the SLP do realise that there is much more to be done though and are keen to do this.

4.11 Luke says it was only after his mother and sister's death whilst waiting in the police station and looking at the posters displayed there in relation to DA, that he realised this was the life that they had been living. He found the posters a powerful way to put over to members of the public the impact of DA.

4.12 During the panel meeting that Luke and Ryan played a part of, it was agreed by all present that inputs into schools was essential to raise awareness in relation to DA where the behaviour is controlling and coercive.

15. Recommendations

15.1 This was a tragedy that it appears nobody could foresee yet Claire, Luke, Ryan and Charlotte had been suffering intense domestic abuse for many years and didn't know this was what they were suffering as there was no physical abuse. The behaviour by the perpetrator, was endemic and was not known by professionals, nor sadly, was it understood by members of the family.

15.2 Equally, the introduction in December 2015 of the legislative changes to domestic abuse which came later on in this case, has been a 'slow burn' in terms of the wider public and professional knowledge and this tragedy highlights that this is not just a local issue, but is a wider issue across England and Wales. Prosecutions remain at a low level and some police forces have not made any prosecutions as yet.

15.3 The review author makes the following recommendations that he hopes will help to raise the profile of the debilitating effect that this form of domestic abuse has on victims and their families.

Recommendation 1:

The Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (LSCP) should convene a series of practitioner's events across the County for agencies, using the lessons learned from this case. This will highlight the effect of controlling and coercive behaviour, also the risk posed at the time or immediately after a separation. The partnership could extend these events both regionally and nationally.

Recommendation 2:

The SLP should engage with the Home office or other national organisations, in order to engage nationally with learning concerning the significance of controlling and coercive behaviour. This is to consider a nationwide publicity campaign using Claire, Charlotte, Luke and Ryan's life story as the case study. The purpose of this is to gain wider public understanding of what coercive control means. This will also enable perpetrators to recognise that their behaviour to their family is abusive and criminal. This could include leaflets and posters where appropriate.

(Both Luke and Ryan have offered to speak at events both locally and nationally in support of agencies response to recognising controlling and coercive behaviour and their experiences. It is important that this momentum is not lost so that this matter does not become 'another case' rather that it prevents or assists in identifying other potential cases.)

Recommendation 3:

The SLP should ensure that each statutory agency within their area provides assurance that its strategic safeguarding leads have raised training and awareness in their agency so that front-line staff can recognise the signs and symptoms of coercive and controlling behaviour as a form of domestic abuse.

Recommendation 4:

The SLP should ask the CCG to issue a guidance note and consider training for all GP practices in their area highlighting the need to ask questions overtly about DA, and to require that they have up to date knowledge of Coercive Control as a form of domestic abuse¹⁰.

Recommendation 5:

i) The SLP should ask the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) to consider adopting a coercive control-based definition in future children and domestic abuse work and moving beyond a physical incident model which would enable them to develop deeper understanding

¹⁰ From Home Office VAWG strategy 2016-2020 'A range of effective interventions can make it easier for NHS services to play their part. For example, the Identification & Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) model in health practices is a domestic violence and abuse training, support and referral programme to support GPs in asking about and responding to such disclosures. The model is currently running in 33 areas and we will promote it to local commissioners in 2016/17.'

of these children's lived experiences and support needs¹¹.

ii) The SLP should ask the LSCB to consider making a request to schools within their area that the awareness sessions that they run on DA include controlling and coercive behaviour.

In summing up as highlighted at the start of this report, it is important that this review echoes the words of the family, in tribute to Claire and Charlotte:

“Charlotte and our mum were our inspiration and purpose in life. They were the two most virtuous and beautiful people we have ever encountered. It is not possible to describe how unfairly and cruelly they have been taken from us. Our world is a darker place because they have gone”

Luke and Ryan Hart

¹¹ Katz E (2016) Beyond the physical incident model: how children living with domestic violence are harmed by and resist regimes of coercive control. Child abuse review volume 25 46-59 (2016)