

DHR – Miles – Summary, Key Issues and Recommendations

Miles, a 72-year-old man died by suicide in March 2024. He had a long history of bipolar disorder, alcohol dependence, physical health issues, and suicidal ideation. Miles lived with his wife Olivia for over 20 years; their relationship involved escalating domestic abuse, including physical, emotional, and financial abuse.

Key Issues

- **Unseen Male Victims:** Gendered assumptions led to under-recognition of Miles as a domestic abuse victim; abuse was sometimes misinterpreted as 'carer stress'.
- **Missed Opportunities:** Agencies failed to complete domestic abuse risk assessments or bespoke suicide prevention plans despite clear indicators of risk.
- **Fragmented Responses:** Lack of integrated assessment across mental health, substance misuse, and domestic abuse services; poor information sharing.
- **Professional Curiosity:** Limited probing into underlying drivers of Miles's alcohol use, rumination, and relationship dynamics.
- **Counter Allegations:** Inconsistent understanding of abuse dynamics; no structured assessment of conflicting accounts.
- **Training Gaps:** Insufficient awareness of links between domestic abuse and suicide; lack of specialist training on supporting male victims.
- **Recording & Safety Netting:** Incomplete documentation of safety planning and interventions.

Recommendations

- **Police:** Reinforce professional curiosity and thorough recording; consider house-to-house enquiries in DA cases.
- **Health Services (GP, NWAFT, CPFT):** Refresh domestic abuse and suicide prevention training; improve documentation and referral pathways.
- **Adult Social Care:** Strengthen DA risk assessment protocols; ensure safe contact practices.
- **CGL:** Develop escalation pathways for high-risk cases; offer alternatives to group sessions for isolated clients.
- **Peterborough Women's Aid:** Enhance case management training with focus on professional curiosity.
- **Raise awareness of the link between domestic abuse and suicide across all services.**
- **Embed best practice suicide intervention training, including bespoke safety plans.**
- **Include domestic abuse as a priority in the Cambridgeshire Suicide Prevention Strategy.**
- **Review local DASV strategy to ensure adequate resources for male victims.**
- **Improve training on counter allegations and unclear abuse dynamics.**
- **Strengthen safeguarding board training on DA indicators, DASH risk assessments, and motivational interviewing.**