



North Worcestershire
Community Safety Partnership

Executive Summary of the Domestic Homicide Review

In respect of the homicide of Farshida¹
In March 2020

Report produced for North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership by
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¹ pseudonym

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1. Background - The Homicide

- 1.1. This review concerns the circumstances leading to the killing of a 28-year-old woman and mother of two, Farshida (pseudonym), in Worcestershire in March 2020. Farshida's 44-year-old husband, Nabil (pseudonym), was found guilty of her murder.

2. Summary of Chronology

- 2.1. Farshida was born and raised in Afghanistan. She had been a bright and aspirational student and attended college achieving high grades. She had an arranged marriage with her friend's brother, Nabil, in 2011 when she was aged 19.
- 2.2. Nabil, who was aged 34 at the time of the marriage had been living in the UK after seeking asylum in 2002. He had been married before and 3 reports of domestic abuse were made to the police before the marriage ended in divorce. He was not charged with any offence.
- 2.3. Farshida came to the UK in 2014 after her first child was born and was granted 'indefinite leave to remain,' settling her immigration status in the UK. Her second child was born in 2015 in a Walsall hospital, without complications, and Nabil's child from his first marriage also came to live with the family as the child's mother was unable to care for the child.
- 2.4. Thereafter, the family moved a couple of times, and for short periods, before settling in Bromsgrove, in 2017, where the couple began a pizza take-away business and became homeowners.
- 2.5. In terms of services, the family received routine health services and the younger children received universal health visiting services before attending school. There were no disclosures of domestic abuse made, nor indicators of domestic abuse present, in any of the family's routine contact with agencies and the three children attended school without concerns.
- 2.6. Farshida enrolled at the Heart of Worcestershire College in September 2019 and attended for two days per week to study English as a Second Language. She spoke Farsi and her use of English was still limited at this stage and her husband spoke for her when she enrolled. She was observed by teachers to be quiet and studious, but she became more confident as her studies continued. During her attendances, Farshida did not make any disclosures of domestic abuse either directly to the college or to other students. She last attended college three weeks before she was reported missing.

3. Key Findings

3.1. Experience of Domestic Abuse

- 3.1.1. Although no agency was aware of domestic abuse in the household, and no indicators of domestic abuse had been brought to their attention, the criminal investigation after Farshida's death revealed some of her experiences of domestic abuse.
- 3.1.2. Farshida had disclosed to her family that she endured significant physical violence. Her husband threatened to kill her every day and she had had to lock herself in the bathroom to evade his abuse. Her sadness and suffering were obvious during her family's contact with her, but she would nevertheless tell them that everything was fine and invested her energies and attention in the care of the children. One member of the public had noticed Farshida with a black eye and asked her about it, but she said it was accidental.
- 3.1.3. It is difficult for family, friends and members of the public to know what to do when they suspect domestic abuse is happening, particularly if the victim minimises or denies their experiences when asked. Research has shown that family and friends are often fearful of asking personal questions about abuse: worried about making the situation worse; worried about acting on just a suspicion and not knowing who to contact (CAB, 2015).² Each local area should ensure that they make guidance available for family and friends and members of the public on how to respond to domestic abuse.
- 3.1.4. Nabil stalked Farshida and she filmed him on her mobile phone doing so. Evidence has revealed that stalking behaviour usually involves a perpetrator's fixation and obsession and should always be taken seriously by professionals. In research on domestic homicides, stalking behaviours were present in 94% of the homicides (Monckton-Smith et al., 2017:12).

3.2 Barriers to support and protection

- 3.2.1 The review firstly considered whether cultural values, norms and beliefs may have created a barrier for Farshida. Although domestic abuse and violence against women are universal phenomena, the review recognised that both Farshida and her husband were brought up in Afghanistan, which is a highly patriarchal society and as such has

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<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Crime%20and%20Justice%20Publications/Linkinthechain.pdf>

high levels of violence against women. Afghanistan adheres to rigid codes of so-called 'honour' and women have traditionally faced a highly subordinated position with a central role in maintaining family unity.

- 3.2.2 The extent to which Farshida or Nabil adhered to notions of 'honour' or 'shame,' or gender roles and expectations, was not known but may have created the first of many barriers for Farshida in understanding her experiences and seeking help. Beyond going to college, Farshida was particularly isolated and had no family or close friends in the country. She was relatively new to the country; her command of English was limited, and she had no community networks. She was also unfamiliar with the nature of services and help that was available, not having drawn upon welfare benefits or social housing at any time.
- 3.2.3 It is unlikely that victims of domestic abuse who are new to the UK will be aware of the help and support that is available for them or know about their rights and entitlements. Local areas should ensure that information is available in a range of community languages in places that newly arriving communities may frequent, particularly in universal services.
- 3.2.4 Farshida was killed by her husband five days after the first lockdown under the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic increased the isolation and risk for all domestic abuse victims but Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) faced additional barriers and were at significantly increased risk of domestic homicide. Local areas need to ensure that their awareness raising about help and support that is available reaches minoritised and marginalised groups of women experiencing domestic abuse

3.3 Role of Further Education

- 3.3.1 Universal services, including schools and colleges play a vital role in being able to reach victims of domestic abuse, both adults and children, particularly those who are isolated from other services by virtue of being marginalised in the wider community. The Heart of Worcestershire College, where she had been learning to speak English, was therefore an important opportunity for her and it is to the college's credit that Farshida increased in confidence as her command of English grew. The College will be providing assurance of its response to domestic abuse.
- 3.3.2 Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance (2021) identifies the important role that schools, colleges and universities have in the prevention, early identification and the response to domestic abuse. However, whilst guidance is available for the former and the latter, there is not specific guidance for further education or adult education settings which provide the main source of learning opportunities for adults who have newly

arrived in the UK or learning English and a recommendation on this point is therefore made

3.4 Children's Experiences of Domestic Abuse

- 3.4.1 No agency was aware that the children were being exposed to domestic abuse at home and were therefore victims of domestic abuse in their own right, and the children in this family did not appear to feel able to talk to any professional about what was happening at home.
- 3.4.2 This review highlights the need to create safe environments for children to be able to disclose domestic abuse to a trusted adult. By necessity identifying children and young people experiencing domestic abuse at the earliest opportunity involves delivering clear messages to them about safety and domestic abuse at each age and stage of their development, in ways that traverse cultural underpinnings.

3.5 Concluding remarks

- 3.5.1 Whilst no agency was aware of the domestic abuse that Farshida experienced before she was brutally killed by her husband, North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership and Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board have been asked to reflect upon how they can reach more marginalised populations and increase disclosures and reporting of domestic abuse by adults and children alike.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Recommendation 1: Children's Records

North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership to recommend to Worcestershire Children First that the final report of this review is attached to each of the children's social care records. This is so that, if they wish to read the report of the domestic homicide review when they are older, it will be available to them.

- 4.2 **Recommendation 2:** Supporting Family & Friends to Respond to Domestic Abuse
Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to develop and promote local guidance for family, friends and members of the public on how to respond safely to domestic abuse and direct to sources of support.
The Board to monitor the success of its guidance and promotion is successful and reaching across the communities in ways such as monitoring increased demand for advice from domestic abuse services from family and friends.

4.3 Recommendation 3: Stalking

Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to raise both agency and public awareness about the nature and risks of stalking behaviours in domestic abuse and the help that is available through specialist domestic abuse services and through the police.

The Board to monitor the success of its promotion including whether it was effective in reaching across its communities in ways such as:

- increasing numbers of calls to the National Stalking Helpline and West Mercia Women's Aid
- increasing reports of stalking and increasing use of Stalking Protection Orders by West Mercia Police

4.4 Recommendation 4: Enabling Access to Help and Support for Minoritised Women Experiencing Domestic Abuse

Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to promote awareness of the help and support available for minoritised women experiencing domestic abuse, utilising its well-established community engagement infrastructure, such as that used to tackle hate crime, as well as in a broad range of community languages.

The Board to monitor the effectiveness of its promotion by measuring increased access to the help and support provided by the police and domestic abuse agencies from minoritised groups of women experiencing domestic abuse.

4.5 Recommendation 5: Promoting Awareness of Domestic Abuse for those Learning English as a Second Language

Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board to promote best practice in raising awareness of domestic abuse and the help that is available with providers of English as a Second Language courses within their area and ensure that they are connected into specialist domestic abuse services.

Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board should seek evidence from further and higher education establishments in their area on how they raise awareness of domestic abuse and the support that is available with all students, including those studying English as a Second Language.

4.6 Recommendation 6: Best Practice in the Further Education Response to Domestic Abuse

The Home Office is asked to consider in future iterations of the Domestic Abuse Statutory Guidance, including guidance specifically for further and adult education

colleges and settings, which provide learning opportunities and support for marginalised communities of adult students studying English as a Second Language.

4.7 **Recommendation 7: Enabling Children's Disclosure of Domestic Abuse**

In order to enable children and young people to disclose domestic abuse and seek help at the earliest opportunity, Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board should use this review to highlight with schools the need to continue to create safe environments and provide clear messaging on healthy relationships at each age and stage of a child's development, and in ways which address cultural underpinnings of violence against women.

4.8 **Recommendation 8: Enabling the Experience of Minoritised Victims to be Heard in Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews**

North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership to ensure that the voice of domestic abuse victims from minoritised communities is made available to subsequent Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews, where applicable, through either representation of specialist agency on the panel or for review of the draft Overview Report before finalisation."

Appendices: The Review Process

i Summary

The decision to undertake a domestic homicide review was made by the Chair of North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership, and the Home Office was notified of the decision in November 2020. An independent chair and review panel were appointed, and the review was managed in accordance with the relevant statutory guidance. Beyond domestic homicide reviews, Paula Harding is wholly independent of the local area, having no other connection with any agencies in Worcestershire. The review panel members are listed below and were likewise all independent of the particular case.

The process began with an initial meeting of the review panel in November 2020 but was delayed thereafter, by criminal proceedings. Terms of reference were drawn up by the panel and incorporated key lines of enquiry as featured below. Agencies participating in this review are featured below as well as those who had no contact. The review panel met on three occasions.

The victim's family were notified about the review in writing by the Independent Chair of the review. All communications were translated into Farsi and the Police Family Liaison Officer, who had come to know the family well, introduced the domestic homicide review to them, with the help of a translator. However, the family did not respond to requests to engage and were deemed to have declined their engagement. Likewise, the Independent Chair wrote to Nabil in prison, with letters translated into Farsi, but he also did not respond.

The Overview Report was endorsed by North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership on 06.09.2023 before being submitted to the Home Office for approval. The Home Office Quality Assurance Panel endorsed the report on 28.04.24.

ii Review Panel Members

Name	Role/Organisation
Paula Harding	Independent Chair
Bev Houghton	Community Safety Manager, Bromsgrove District Council & Redditch Borough Council
Claire King	Safeguarding Services Manager, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust
Diane Harding	Training & Participation Officer, West Mercia Women's Aid
Deborah Narburgh	Head of Safeguarding, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Daniel Gray	Safeguarding Quality Assurance - Group Manager & Principal Social Worker, Worcestershire Children First
Heather Manning	Head of Safeguarding & Designated Nurse - Children, Adults and Children Looked After and MCA Lead, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board
Paul Kinsella	Senior Public Health Practitioner, Worcestershire County Council Public Health
Sarah Cox	Head of Safeguarding, Worcestershire County Council Adult Social Care
Stephen Cook	Detective Inspector, West Mercia Police

iii Key Lines of Enquiry

The review will explore how the family's experiences of domestic abuse were understood and responded to by agencies, family and community. It should address both the 'generic issues' set out in the Statutory Guidance and the following specific issues identified in this particular case:

- 1. What was known about domestic abuse within the household by agencies, the community and family and how did agencies respond?**
 - How effective were agencies in responding to the needs and risks within the family?
 - What barriers to engagement did agencies face and how did they seek to overcome these barriers?
 - If domestic abuse was not known, how might agencies have identified the existence of domestic abuse from other issues presented to them?
- 2. What was understood about attitudes to domestic abuse within the family and how did agencies respond**
 - How did issues of equality and diversity impact upon agency responses? Equality issues to include marriage, maternity, race, ethnicity, religion and belief, and sex.
 - Whether so-called 'honour'-based violence was identified and how it was responded to.
- 3. How did agencies respond to allegations against the perpetrator of indecency, child abduction and sexualised threats?**
 - How did the perpetrator's prior history influence how agencies responded?
 - Whether allegations gave rise to the threat of violence against women and child abuse within the family?
- 4. How effective were agencies in working together to prevent harm and to meet individuals' needs, including across time and borders?**
- 5. Whether good practice can be identified?**
- 6. What lessons can be learnt to prevent harm in the future?**

iv Agency Involvement in the Review

Summaries of agency contact were provided by the following agencies but none of their contact was considered relevant to the review. No disclosures of domestic abuse within the family were made to any agency and no presentations were indicators of domestic abuse.

- Heart of Worcestershire College
- Hereford & Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (school nursing)
- NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board
- Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- Walsall Children's Services
- Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust
- West Mercia Police (provided contextual information for the period prior to this marriage, held by Police Scotland)
- West Midlands Police
- Schools (First and Middle)

The following agencies were contacted but confirmed that the family were not known to them prior to the homicide:

- Cranstoun (domestic abuse and drug and alcohol services)
- The Probation Service
- Swanswell (former drug and alcohol service)
- West Mercia Women's Aid (domestic abuse service)
- West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Worcestershire County Council Adult Social Care
- Worcestershire Children First