

Royal Borough of Greenwich Community Safety Partnership

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW

Under s9 of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004

In respect of the death of 'Tania' in February 2015

report produced by Independent Chair
Dr Jane Monckton Smith

Final
February 2020

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1. The Review Process

This summary outlines the process undertaken by the Royal Borough of Greenwich Community Safety Partnership, Domestic Homicide Review Panel in reviewing the homicide of Tania who was a resident in their area.

The following pseudonyms have been used in this review for the victim and perpetrator to protect their identities and those of their family members:

Tania was 57 years old when she was killed.

Richard was 63 years old when he killed her.

They were both White British.

Criminal proceedings were completed on the 28th June 2016 and the perpetrator was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment with no access to parole for 16 years, until 2032.

The review process began with an initial meeting of the Community Safety Partnership in June 2015 when the decision to hold a domestic homicide review was agreed. All agencies that potentially had contact with Tania and Richard prior to the point of Tania's death were contacted and asked to confirm whether they had involvement with them.

2. Contributors to the Review

As there was no agency involvement with Tania and Richard, no IMRs were requested and the review was informed mainly by the Metropolitan Police investigation, health records and statements from family and friends.

3. The Review Panel Members

Dr Jane Monckton Smith – Independent Chair
Annette Hines – Senior Community Safety Officer, Safer Communities Team, Royal Borough of Greenwich,
Simon King – Social Worker, Safeguarding Adults and DOLS Team, Royal Borough of Greenwich,
Sharon Whittington – Safer Communities Team Manager, Safer Communities Team, Royal Borough of Greenwich,
Judith Banjoko, DVA Services Manager, Housing for Women, Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse (GDVA) Service,
Dipa Patel – Senior IDSV/IDSV Manager, Her Centre,
Jennifer Theodule, Mental Health Practice Learning Co-ordinator, Oxleas Adult Mental Health,
Angela Middleton, Patient Safety Lead, Mental Health, NHS England,

Janice Cawley, Detective Sergeant, Metropolitan Police,
Deidre Bryant, Head of Service, National Probation Service,
Wayne Butcher, Service Manager, CGL Substance Misuse Service,
Bernie Nipper, Support Midwife, Local Supervising Authority, NHS England,
Andrew Coombe, Designated Nurse for Adult Safeguarding, NHS Greenwich CCG,
Sue Haile, PA to Dr Jane Monckton Smith and Minute Taker.

All members of the Panel had not worked directly with either the victim, perpetrator, or their families.

The Panel met on the following dates;

- 1st June 2016
- 22nd July 2016
- 1st September 2016
- 20th October 2016
- 13th November 2017

4. Author of the Overview Report

Dr Jane Monckton Smith was appointed by the Royal Borough of Greenwich Community Safety Partnership as Independent Chair and Author of the Overview Report in November 2015. She is a Forensic Criminologist specialising in domestic homicide. She lectures in criminology and criminal investigation and is an active researcher and is published in the area of domestic homicide. Dr Monckton Smith trains professionals in advanced risk and threat assessment in the area of coercive control, stalking and domestic abuse, and also works with a number of homicide and stalking charities helping victims and professionals understand domestic homicide, and domestic abuse and stalking.

Dr Monckton Smith has had no previous involvement with the Royal Borough of Greenwich Community Safety Partnership nor any of the agencies involved in the domestic homicide review into the death of Tania.

5. Terms of Reference

- To establish the facts about events leading up to and following the death of Tania; killed by Richard.
- To examine the roles of the organisations involved in the case, the extent to which Tania and Richard had involvement with those agencies, and the appropriateness of single agency and partnership responses to the case.
- To establish whether there are lessons to be learnt from this case about the way in which organisations and partnerships carried out their responsibilities to safeguard the wellbeing of those deceased.
- To identify clearly what those lessons are, how they will be acted upon and what is expected to change as a result.

- To identify whether as a result there is a need for changes in organisational and/or partnership policy, procedures or practice in The Royal Borough of Greenwich in order to improve our work to better safeguard victims of domestic abuse.
- To produce a chronology of involvement with the victim, Tania, and the perpetrator, Richard, and events and actions from January 1995 to February 2015; seeking information from;
 - Organisations who had contact with them
 - Local community organisations
 - Their family and friends
- To review current roles, responsibilities, policies and practices in relation to victims of domestic abuse to build up a picture of what should have happened.
- To review this against what actually happened to draw out the strengths and weaknesses.
- To review national best practice in respect of protecting adults from domestic abuse and coercive control.
- To draw out conclusions about how organisations and partnerships can improve their working in the future to support victims of domestic abuse and coercive control.
- The review will also consider:
- An assessment of whether family and friends were aware of any abusive or controlling behaviour from the perpetrator to the victim.

6. Summary Chronology and Key Issues arising from the Review

- 6.1 Richard and Tania were suffering serious trouble in their relationship from at least 1999. They had at some point been living together in an intimate relationship and had two children together, but by around at least 1998 Tania was deeply unhappy and wanted to leave Richard.
- 6.2 It is noted by family that Richard was a man who followed strict routines, and also imposed those routines on family members. He would do things at the same time every day without any diversion. He would become very agitated and challenging if there was any disruption to his routines. This observation by family is concerning and is noted in other homicide reviews as a behavioural trait to a more, or lesser extent, in homicide and domestic abuse perpetrators.
- 6.3 This observation also gives some insight into the ways that Richard managed to keep control in his own life, but also exert control on others. Tania and the children knew that they had to adhere to Richard's routines and rituals, so they knew when they had to be around for meals and so on. This is a very common tactic used in coercive and controlling individuals. It also gives us some insight into the way those routines could have ordered and structured his life so he felt more in control.

- 6.4 Richard had given up work and was claiming incapacity benefit. However, he supplemented his benefits by working from his garage as a mechanic. The relationship between the two was platonic and they were living emotionally separate lives. Family said of the two that Tania wanted to leave, but Richard did not. It appears that Tania had little love for Richard by this time, and family say that he was a difficult, solitary and depressive person who liked routine.
- 6.5 The picture built of Richard is that he was able to be solitary and anti-social through his ability to claim benefits. He was also able to impose his obsessive routines and rituals on others, as they complied to keep the peace. He appeared to be rooted to the home, and did not seek to move on from his relationship with Tania or change his lifestyle.
- 6.6 Tania started a relationship with John sometime after 1998, John was married to Carol at the time. They had met when Tania had started to attend a swimming club for her youngest child who was around 9 at the time. Tania had become a secretary to the club and was taking exams in refereeing and in judging swimming competitions. Family state that Tania was dedicated to her children and very involved in their lives.
- 6.7 Tania believed sincerely that she and John were going to live together and start a new life. It is noted in statements that John led her to believe that this was a realistic aspiration for them. She had already been living a separate life from Richard. This relationship seemed to give Tania the confidence to leave Richard, but he did not accept her decision and this is when the stalking started, giving some insight into Richard's dependence on Tania.
- 6.8 Tania moved away from Richard and purchased a flat with a mortgage, which she moved in to. She continued to pay the mortgage at her joint home with Richard. He was not contributing to the mortgage. During the time that Tania was living in the flat, Richard would stalk her and follow her. He would constantly send messages and flowers and hang around outside her flat. He would contact Tania constantly and made things difficult for her. He was also threatening self-harm.
- 6.9 The behaviours described are noted to be indicators of elevated risk after a separation. Family, friends and Tania considered Richard to be strange, more than they considered him dangerous. This is a learning point, for controlling behaviours are not always recognized as dangerous or high risk, but are a serious indicator of potential future harm, especially where the control is diminished or broken.
- 6.10 The relationship between Tania and John came to the attention of John's wife Carol, who sent a letter to Richard informing him of it. Richard confronted John at the swimming club and there was a minor assault and a heated argument. Carol went to Tania's flat and there was an altercation between the two women which resulted in Carol receiving a cut lip. John left

with Carol and tended to her, he did not stay with Tania at the time, and he did not leave his wife. After this Tania realised that John was not sincere in his promises to set up a life with her.

- 6.11 Tania was forced to move back to the house with Richard as she could not afford to pay the mortgages on both properties. She moved back with the understanding that the relationship between her and Richard was over and that they would live separate lives. She continued to pay the mortgage on the house and sold the flat.
- 6.12 The separation has been confirmed from many sources. GP records for Tania show that she was not in a sexual relationship with Richard from at least 2002, though family state it was long before this time. Richard confirms the lack of intimacy in the relationship by reporting to his GP on numerous occasions that he was not 'sexually active', and in 2014 hadn't been so for 12 years. He also reported erectile dysfunction.
- 6.13 Tania and Richard's children also confirm that their parents were living separate lives, but that Richard would still impose routines on all of them and would control Tania's activities. He was described as needing strict routine and insisting on imposing that routine on everyone in the house. He would do things at the same time on the same day, following a strict pattern. He would prepare food for Tania which he insisted she ate, at the same times every day. The routine was so strict that it was a point of comment when one day it was not adhered to. Tania had said that she did not want to eat the food he prepared but would go along with the routines to try and avoid upset in the home.
- 6.14 There are statements made by family and to the police which state that Richard was quite self-focused and that he felt life had dealt him a bad hand. The Independent Chair met with Richard in prison after the murder and he stated in that interview that he felt he had been a victim for most of his life. He felt he was a victim in the relationship because Tania did not want to stay with him.
- 6.15 The various information suggests that Richard was quite moody and often miserable, fairly self-isolated, concerned about his health and very routine controlled. People also described him as controlling of Tania. Tania was deeply unhappy living with Richard, and in the last year of her life, felt she could no longer tolerate him.
- 6.16 By 2012 Tania was complaining to her friends that her life was very difficult and that she was very unhappy. She said she felt trapped in the house and that Richard would not let her leave. It is a concern that Tania was expressing the thought that she was trapped.

- 6.17 By this time a pattern can be identified in Richard's behaviour. The behaviour fits with many elements of coercion and control. Tania never made any allegation that Richard was violent. However, family and others do observe controlling patterns which dominated Tania's day to day life. She would follow his routines, placate him, and help him maintain the solitary lifestyle he wanted to live. The fact that Richard would not accept the end of the relationship made it impossible for Tania to pursue other relationships. These patterns when considered with the stalking behaviours, the jealousy, and the suicidal threats, build a picture of domestic abuse, albeit a picture which many would not recognize as fitting the criteria.
- 6.18 In 2013 there are concerns noted by Tania that she felt Richard was trying to poison her. She thought he was putting poison in her food. Richard would force Tania to eat to his routine, and to eat the food he cooked. Tania attended her doctor's surgery complaining of chronic stomach pain and nausea, and tests were done to establish if she had liver problems. It was suggested that she change her diet. Tania did not disclose her concerns about Richard trying to poison her to health professionals.
- 6.19 Tania did use the doctor's advice to assert that she could not eat the food Richard had cooked and to his timetable. This reveals that Tania was fearful of Richard and that he might harm her. She shared her fears with family but not with professionals. This is an important observation. No-one considered that Tania was frightened of Richard, and they may have been right in thinking she wasn't frightened that he would hit her. However, in domestic abuse the fear is very often of the consequences of upsetting the perpetrator, and a realization that they could be capable of harm in a number of ways. Tania thought Richard was trying to poison her, she was frightened of him, and the consequences of upsetting him. This is a high risk marker in domestic abuse.
- 6.20 Even though the picture of the relationship appears atypical in domestic abuse terms, there are now a significant number of high risk markers evident, but not known by agencies. The high risk nature of Richard's behaviour was also not recognized by the family or Tania's friends, but there is indication Tania was concerned he would harm her. More knowledge around coercive control is identified as a need for communities.
- 6.21 Things appeared to come to a head in 2015 when Richard and Tania had a formal disagreement over the mortgage. Tania approached a number of legal professionals but felt she could not afford to engage them. Tania approached a consultant through an online help service who had agreed to support her with the sale of the family home. This consultant agreed to help her draw up legal documents.
- 6.22 Information supplied by Tania to the consultant reveals that Tania was very unhappy. Tania became very confident that with the consultant's support she

had the ability to leave Richard. She had plans to move away to the north of the country and everyone was aware of the house sale and the split.

- 6.23 Richard objected strongly and even tried to get the council to buy the house from him. He told the children that he could not afford to buy the house from Tania and started to behave more strangely. Family state that in the last few days before killing Tania, Richard changed and became sneering and withdrawn.
- 6.24 On the night before the murder he made the evening meal for himself half an hour late. This was seen as quite shocking by the family, given his strict routines and they talked about it and wondered why it had happened.
- 6.25 On that night Tania went to work as usual. When she returned home in the early hours of the morning Richard was lying in wait for her behind the front door. As she walked in he attacked her with a knife stabbing her in the back 14 times. He killed her. Richard then called the police immediately and admitted what he had done.
- 6.26 The timeline suggests that Richard realised that Tania was resolved to move out and to seek a completely separate life. He seemed to recognise that his life was going to change, and could not accept that. He blamed Tania for everything.
- 6.27 He was charged with murder. He was found guilty at a trial and sentenced to life with a tariff of 16 years.
- 6.28 This case presents many challenges because there were few opportunities for intervention by agencies in the traditional sense. There were a number of high risk markers that appear on formal risk identification checklists, and in the extant research, which were observable in this case.

Those risk markers are as follows:

Suicidal threats: Richard threatened suicide on many occasions when Tania said she wanted to leave. He talked about 'topping himself' should she ever do it. These threats were known by the whole family. This behaviour is a risk marker for potential future harm or homicide, especially where there is a separation, though its importance is not widely known by the general public.

Fear in the victim: Tania was behaving in a way designed to placate and manage Richard's behaviour. She would follow his strict routines, and felt she was trapped. She was fearful he was trying to poison her. Even if there was no basis in fact for this fear, the fear itself was real and revealed that Tania saw him as a threat to her. This fear is also an acknowledged risk marker for future serious harm.

Coercive control: Richard controlled the family especially with his routines and mood swings. He would check Tania's whereabouts and insist on knowing what she was doing and who she was with. The whole family did much as he wanted, as the consequences of upsetting or challenging him created difficulties for everyone. This is a marker for future harm. Behaviours designed to control the actions of a partner through fear of consequences, or fear of harm, are a risk marker, and more significantly linked to homicide, than violence alone.

Stalking: Apart from the surveillance activities when the two were living in the same house, Richard escalated his stalking behaviours when Tania moved out. He stalked Tania the whole time she was living away, and threatened suicide. Stalking is a behaviour significantly associated with future harm in an intimate/former intimate relationship. Research has shown that stalking is in the antecedents of between 70 and 90% of Intimate Partner Homicides (Campbell *et al* 2007)

Routine and ritual behaviour: Richard was a stickler for routine and imposed those routines on others. This is an acknowledged behaviour of people who are controlling. Family members have their food, activities and other things tightly controlled and often do not break the routines for fear of upsetting the controlling person. These routines not only control others pushing them to a timetable, they also indicate a need for control in the person imposing the routines.

Excessive jealousy: Richard was excessively jealous and wanted to know where Tania was all the time. This kind of paranoia around a partner leaving is associated with potential future harm after separation, or the threat separation.

Self-focused behaviours: Richard was very self-focused. He thought that all the things that happened to him were Tania's fault and that he bore no responsibility. This mind set is associated with domestic abuse. The perpetrator told the Independent Chair that he felt Tania was to blame for his misfortunes, and that he was a victim in life.

Depression : Richard said he was suffering from depression. This is associated with aggravating risk for harm, especially when observed in conjunction with other risk markers.

The review panel was led to believe that there had been a serious dispute over the mortgage between Tania and Richard but the Halifax bank did not respond to requests for information.

7. Conclusions

There was no involvement with statutory agencies in this case and few real opportunities for intervention. Whilst it has become clear in the analysis of this case that Richard could have been considered high risk for harming Tania, no agency was in possession of any information, or even the opportunity to perform a risk assessment. Family and friends had information, but did not recognise the high risk behaviours as concerning.

The only agency with potential access to the information, and an opportunity for intervention was the GP surgery. Both Tania and Richard attended their doctor's surgeries for various problems. Routine Enquiry may have helped identify the emotional and behavioural problems Richard had which were quite serious. Tania was complaining of how difficult her life was, and she even thought that Richard was trying to poison her. This is a serious concern, but whilst she shared it with family, she did not share it with her GP even when she went for tests.

A second possibility for intervention was in Tania's conversations about selling the house with professionals. She went to see lawyers but could not afford their services. She sought the services of an unqualified consultant and disclosed how unhappy she was. If the risk markers which can arise in trying to separate from controlling people were more widely recognised as potentially dangerous, these disclosures could have resulted in Tania being given information and appropriate support, and perhaps referred to a specialist agency.

The conclusion is that Richard had serious control issues which came to a head when Tania's leaving, and his having to move home, became inevitable. He blamed Tania for all the problems in his life and responded to those problems with planned and deliberate fatal violence.

More public and professional knowledge and awareness of specific concerning behaviours, and the space to discuss those problems with people able to help, may have helped in this case.

8. Lessons to be Learnt

Learning opportunity 1: Routine Enquiry (RE) could have encouraged Tania to talk with GPs about her concerns with Richard's behaviour. This may have created the opportunity to give Tania advice about risky behaviours, and specialist support in leaving him.

Learning opportunity 2: Legal advisors in this case didn't have a basic knowledge of the dangers of separation where there is domestic abuse or coercive control. Lawyers could routinely give information about specialist DA services in such cases. A recommendation could include all non-qualified consultants where legal advice, help or support is given. It would be useful for this to include all Citizens Advice Bureau.

Learning opportunity 3: Awareness-raising for the public of the importance of recognizing domestic abuse and coercive control, and the problems and risks which may be raised when trying to separate could have helped in this case.

Learning opportunity 4: A support system like IRIS could have helped GPs to raise and respond to the issues present in the relationship.

Learning opportunity 5: The Independent Chair found it very difficult to obtain information from some organisations in this case, but more information could have helped identify more learning opportunities.

9. Recommendations from the Review

Recommendation 1: Routine Enquiry should be encouraged in GP consultations where individuals present with any complaint which is commonly related to domestic abuse; for example, depression.

Recommendation 2: The Law society be formally approached to discuss such a national code, and production of an advice leaflet, or use of leaflets produced by local DA services related specifically to separation.

Recommendation 3: A public awareness campaign which focuses on recognizing that some behaviours are concerning especially during a separation (suicide threats, stalking etc).

Recommendation 4: The CCG is already aware of IRIS. GP services could also consider adopting a DA champion scheme where a named individual at the surgery could co-ordinate information, leaflets and posters etc. and potentially, seek extra specific training.

Recommendation 5: that the Home Office make clear where agencies or organisations should help DHRs. The Home Office could give guidance to private companies making clear if there are any obligations, or a code of practice which may help reviews gain crucial information.

10. Glossary

- AAFDA - Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse; support service for victims' families
- BME - Black and Minority Ethnic
- CCG – Clinical Commissioning Group (NHS)
- CSP - Community Safety Partnership
- CPS - Crown Prosecution Service
- DASH - Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-Based Violence Risk Identification, Assessment & Management Model
- DHR - Domestic Homicide Review
- DOLS – Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- DVPP - Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme
- DWP – Department for Work and Pensions
- FLO - Family Liaison Officer (Police)
- FOIA - Freedom of Information Act
- GDVA – Greenwich Domestic Violence and Abuse Services
- GPMS - Government Protective Marking Scheme
- IDSPA – Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocate
- IMR - Individual Management Review
- IPH – Intimate Partner Homicide
- IRIS – Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (a specialist programme for GP services)
- MARAC - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
- MAPPA - Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements
- MHI - Mental Health Investigation
- MOPAC – Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
- MPS – Metropolitan Police Service
- PCT - Primary Care Trust
- SCR - Serious Case Review
- SIO - Senior Investigating Officer
- TOR - Terms of Reference
- VCS - Voluntary and Community Sector