

# DHR 16 - 'PHILLIP'

Died October 2022

Phillip was a good friend and a good dad.  
He always knew how to have a laugh. He was a  
good uncle as well.

He will never be forgotten about. I will never forget about  
all the good times we all spent together. I will miss you  
- I could not ask for a better friend.



## PHILLIP'S LIFE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Phillip was born and brought up in Sefton and lived with his parents and sister. Phillip achieved O-Levels before leaving school. His first job was working on the railways, and he was later a machine operator at a factory. Phillip had a close relationship with his sister. He enjoyed socialising with his friends and family and was a keen musician. He often played his guitar at family get-togethers.

Phillip was previously married and had a son. Phillip's son said when he was growing up, Phillip was the parent that he went to when he wanted anything, such as sweets and treats, because Phillip was a 'softie' and would give in. He also recalled that there was regular conflict in the household by way of verbal arguments between his parents. Phillip and his ex-wife ended their relationship but they continued to live together in the family home until Phillip met Sarah.

Phillip and Sarah met at a party and Phillip quickly moved into Sarah's house. Sarah was a single parent with one child. Phillip and Sarah were in a relationship until Phillip's death.

## PHILLIP'S DEATH

Phillip and Sarah had spent the day drinking alcohol and playing cards in their home. In the small hours of the following morning, Sarah's son heard the sounds of arguing and went downstairs to tell Phillip and Sarah to stop. About 20 minutes later, Sarah shouted that she had stabbed Phillip. The ambulance service and police attended the address and found Phillip suffering from a single stab wound to the chest. Phillip was taken to hospital but sadly died from his injuries. Phillip was 49 years old when he died.

Sarah was arrested and subsequently charged with Phillip's murder. Following a trial, Sarah was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum prison tariff of 17 years.

## 1 KEY FINDING: LACK OF VISIBLE SERVICES IN SEFTON FOR MALE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Research by Dr Elizabeth Bates, University of Cumbria, in relation to the gender bias of male victims of domestic abuse identified that society still did not readily recognise male domestic abuse victims, and that some may have lost their lives as a result.

The research looked at homicides featuring male victims of domestic abuse and found that opportunities to help them were missed due to gender bias and outdated stereotypes. The bias dually inhibited male victims from reporting their abuse, and public support services, such as the police and health care, from recognising them as victims.

Multiple internet searches for variations of 'support for male domestic abuse victims in Sefton' return little information on local services.

Some searches yielded links to national services such as the Men's Advice Line,<sup>[1]</sup> a national charity providing telephone support for male victims of domestic abuse

[1] <https://mensadvice.org.uk/contact-us/>



## Learning

Male victims of domestic abuse face additional barriers to disclosing their experiences and accessing support.

Visible and easily accessible local services are likely to encourage victims of domestic abuse to reach out for help and advice. Since this review was completed, The **Sefton Domestic Abuse Helpline 0151 394 1400** was set up which is available for all victims of domestic abuse.

Professionals can support by ensuring abuse experienced by male victims is recognised by having a clear understanding of what domestic abuse includes and looks like, particularly in relation to coercive control and being aware of support available.

## 2 KEY FINDING: NEED FOR GREATER PUBLIC INFORMATION ON DOMESTIC ABUSE

Family and friends knew Phillip was subject to domestic abuse. Soon after the relationship started, people noticed that Phillip had injuries to his face, and it was clear that Sarah had inflicted them. Over the course of their relationship, friends and relatives witnessed Sarah's abusive relationship to Phillip and they described how it became difficult to stay in touch with him. Sarah would always be present during visits to their home and would interrupt conversations. A friend heard Sarah shouting at Phillip (on the telephone) to come home. On another occasion, a friend was screamed at by Sarah to leave the house when he visited Phillip at home. Sarah was holding a knife in her hand at that time.

Due to a health condition, Phillip was in the clinically extremely vulnerable category during the COVID-19 pandemic. Phillip's sister said that prior to the pandemic, she would see Phillip quite often but that had changed. Afterwards, their contact was mainly restricted to text/telephone contact. Phillip's sister was aware that Phillip had become withdrawn: to such an extent that if he wasn't expecting a visitor then he wouldn't answer the door. This would have made Phillip even more isolated from friends and family and services.

Phillip had suffered assaults and was almost certainly in fear of violence from Sarah. He had been subject to emotional abuse and was isolated from family and friends. The panel thought that Phillip had been subjected to coercive and controlling behaviour by Sarah.

Phillip's family did not report anything to the police or other services, as they were not sure what to do. Phillip was a private man who did not want interference in his life. On one occasion, Phillip's sister challenged Sarah about injuries that Phillip had. Sarah apologised and said it would not happen again.

## Learning

The absence of clear guidance on what members of the public can do when they know or suspect that someone is a victim of domestic abuse, could contribute to the abuse enduring and/or placing the victim in greater danger. Increasing family and 'bystander' knowledge of domestic abuse and what they should do with such information would benefit all victims of domestic abuse, particularly those not known to services.

Professionals can support this by referring family/friends/colleagues to sources of information and help available in Sefton using [www.sefton.gov.uk/domesticabuse](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/domesticabuse) and the **Sefton Domestic Abuse Helpline 0151 394 1400**.