



The Safer *Rotherham*
PARTNERSHIP

Domestic Homicide Review **Supplementary Report**

Jean Redfern

(Born: 4th January 1946)

and

Sarah Redfern

(Born: 29th May 1980)

Both died on 22nd July 2013

Paul Johnston

Director: Johnston and Blockley Ltd

26th November 2014

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This short confidential report should be read in conjunction with the Domestic Homicide Review Overview Report into the manslaughter of Mrs Jean Redfern and the murder of Miss Sarah Redfern by Peter Redfern, in Wath on Dearne, Rotherham, on 22nd July 2013.
- 1.2 The Overview Report concluded that nothing could have been done by the Safer Rotherham Partnership to predict or prevent the tragic events of that day. It also concluded it was highly unlikely that the drugs prescribed to Peter Redfern in the course of his treatment for multiple myeloma had significantly affected him when he killed his wife and daughter.
- 1.3 The Review Panel did not consider it appropriate to articulate fully in the Overview report the contribution made to the review by some family members, for fear of exacerbating a feeling of resentment that has developed between them since the deaths of Jean and Sarah.
- 1.4 Much for the same reason, the Panel chose not to discuss in any detail what they thought to be the rationale behind the decision by the prosecuting authorities to accept a plea of guilty to the manslaughter of Jean Redfern. Although perhaps not something that would normally be a consideration for a Domestic Homicide Review, in this instance the decision related directly to a case specific issue, that of whether the effect of the drugs prescribed to Peter Redfern had contributed to the deaths of Jean and Sarah.

2. The contribution of family members

- 2.1 With the exception of Peter Redfern's two cousins, with whom he has been estranged for 15 and 30 years respectively, the surviving relatives of Jean and Sarah contributed to the review. They agreed that Peter Redfern and his wife and daughters led somewhat unconventional lifestyles, but disagree as to whether Peter Redfern necessarily abused his wife and daughter through a regime of coercive and controlling behaviour.
- 2.2 Mrs Julie Stone said she enjoyed a close relationship with her aunty Jean and her cousin Sarah. She could not recall either Jean or Sarah ever suggesting they were being subjected to physical violence, but she does think that Peter Redfern was a controlling and coercive individual.
- 2.3 She said that at an early stage of their marriage Jean wanted children but Peter did not. They separated for a period prior to Jean becoming pregnant with Sarah and Mrs Stone believes the separation came about because of Jean's desire to have children.
- 2.5 Mrs Stone said that Peter Redfern was an only child and had inherited money from his parents and other family members. He considered the money to be his and was extremely reluctant to let Jean or Sarah benefit from it. By way of example, she described an occasion when Jean had been

extremely angry after Peter had refused to let her have their outdated kitchen re-fitted and instead had bought himself a new car without telling her about it beforehand.

- 2.6 She added that Peter only ever agreed to spend money on the home when it was absolutely essential and that he did not like spending anything on Jean or Sarah. On the other hand, if he wanted anything for himself, he would spend hours researching it on the internet and would then go out and buy it. She said that the family were considered 'frugal' but the reality was that Peter Redfern made all the decisions as far as money was concerned and that Jean and Sarah had no say at all.
- 2.7 She said that Peter Redfern was a very 'cold' individual and was someone you simply could not get close to. On the other hand, the relationship between Jean and Sarah was extremely close.
- 2.8 Mrs Stone described Jean and Sarah as being rather shy. She said they were very 'warm' people though, and would do anything for their friends and family.
- 2.9 Mr Colin Randerson (Jean's brother) and his wife have come to accept that they may never know why Peter Redfern killed his wife and daughter. They say they are at a complete loss as to what happened and why. Mrs Randerson has written to Peter Redfern every month since he went to prison. Although she has not received a reply, he has, through his solicitor, expressed his gratitude to her for writing the letters.
- 2.10 Neither Mr nor Mrs Randerson accept at all that Peter Redfern exerted a controlling or coercive influence over his wife and daughter.
- 2.11 Mr Randerson said he had never seen Peter Redfern utter even so much as an angry word in the 45 years he had known him. He added that he was always a very 'measured' individual.
- 2.12 Mrs Randerson said that although she wouldn't describe their (the Randerson's) relationship with the Redfern's as close, she knew she could always call on them at home without notice. Peter Redfern would usually answer the door and would make them most welcome.
- 2.13 Mrs Randerson said they did not know much about the Redfern's lifestyles because they led such insular lives. They preferred to close themselves off from the rest of the world and stay in their 'own little bubble' rather than allow themselves to be exposed to all the bad things that were going on in the world.
- 2.14 Mr and Mrs Randerson added that none of the Redfern's were 'touchy feely' people. They were all very reserved and Mrs Randerson said that she thought Peter Redfern may at times have been lonely because Jean and

Sarah were very close to one-another and did everything together whereas he was always on the 'outside'.

- 2.15 Both Mr and Mrs Randerson described Peter Redfern as simply being a very quiet person who did not go out very much. He appeared to prefer his own company. They said he was undoubtedly an intelligent, knowledgeable and well-read person. Mr Randerson said that in hindsight, he did wonder whether Peter Redfern had been depressed prior to the diagnosis of cancer.
- 2.16 They said that Peter Redfern would always eat alone while watching television in the kitchen. She added that he liquidised most of his food. Jean and Sarah would eat together in another part of the house.
- 2.17 Mrs Randerson recalled that Peter Redfern was fanatical about his health and about hygiene. She said that a few years ago he would go for a run every day and in more recent years he would use a treadmill.
- 2.18 Mr and Mrs Randerson visited the Redfern's the day after Mrs Redfern had telephoned with the news about the cancer diagnosis. Mr Randerson said that Peter Redfern looked like a 'little boy lost'. She said that as time went on, he lost a lot of weight and that he looked very frail the last time they saw him which was shortly before he killed Jean and Sarah.

Friends/work colleagues

- 2.19 Work colleagues of Sarah said that she was extremely close to her mother and that she loved being in her company. Sarah had said that she enjoyed shopping with her mum but preferred her dad not to be with them, although she did not say why. The friends/work colleagues believed that Sarah's father went for a coffee while the two women were shopping.
- 2.20 They all said that Sarah was a very reserved individual and that she kept herself to herself. Although she would generally be reluctant to initiate a conversation, she would always respond if someone asked her anything. She was an extremely polite person.
- 2.21 One work colleague in particular said that Sarah was an uncomplicated person. She particularly liked costume jewellery and loved good quality shops, but other than that she appeared to live a simple life and was always with her parents when not at work.
- 2.22 One friend said that when they had agreed to meet away from work, she would specifically ask Sarah not to bring her mother with her.
- 2.23 She said she did not know very much about Sarah's home-life, but did know that when the family went on holiday to Whitby (a couple of times a year), they would never stay a full week. They would always go to the same hotel and even ask for the same room if they could get it. Sarah told her that her

- father always had his food blended before he ate it and that Sarah and her mother lived on microwave meals, even on Christmas Day.
- 2.24 One colleague was aware that Sarah had never had a boyfriend or a sexual relationship, something she found strange for a woman in her early 30s.
- 2.25 Sarah's work colleagues thought the family were a little eccentric but that they loved each other very much. There were no signs that there were any issues between them.
- 2.26 The police did not identify any other friends that Sarah may have had outside the work environment.

Neighbours

- 2.27 Long-standing neighbours described how they always 'got on' with Peter, Jean and Sarah and that they all seemed to be fine together. In over 30 years, they had never even heard so much as raised voices within the family and were not aware of them ever having an argument or disagreement about anything.
- 2.28 They said that Jean and Sarah seemed more like sisters because they spent so much time together and that they could often be seen walking into Wath to go shopping. They always seemed happy to be in each other's company.
- 2.29 They regarded the Redfern's to be a nice family, but one that kept themselves to themselves. They were always pleasant and would speak if they saw them in the street just to say 'hello' and ask how each other was. Peter Redfern used to go jogging and would often be seen running up and down the street with his ear phones in, but that was 15 – 20 years ago. Since then, he was rarely seen outside the house.
- 2.30 The police said that the house the family had occupied was rather unusual in that there were several containers in it full of cold water; they assumed that the family had been storing it because the house was on a water meter.

3 Analysis

- 3.1 The two sides of the family have completely different opinions about whether Peter Redfern was controlling and/or coercive towards his wife and daughter but neither has any hard evidence to support their standpoint.
- 3.2 It is the view of the entire panel that on the balance of probabilities, Peter Redfern was a coercive and controlling husband and father. It is also the view of the Panel however, that the evidential threshold to justify that view being articulated in an open report has not been met.

4 The medication

- 4.1 The crimes Peter Redfern had committed, especially the murder of his daughter Sarah, had been violent in the extreme. During the police investigation he had been described as *'Someone who wouldn't hurt a fly'* and as mentioned previously, no-one had ever raised any concerns about his having a propensity towards violence.
- 4.2 The Partnership was aware that when Peter Redfern had been diagnosed with multiple myeloma, he had been admitted on to a trial drugs regime and had subsequently suffered adverse side-effects. The Partnership was concerned that it may have been the drugs he had taken that had caused him to behave in such an uncharacteristically violent manner. Had that been the case, the Partnership would have wished to draw attention to it to prevent the same from happening elsewhere.
- 4.3 The Partnership also wanted to satisfy itself that sufficient information had been provided to Peter Redfern about the drugs and his condition to enable him to make informed decisions about his choice of drugs regime.
- 4.4 Although Peter Redfern voluntarily took part in a drugs trial, it became evident during the review that it was not the actual drugs that were being trialled. The trial compared the outcome for patients treated with one standard initial therapy against those treated under a different regime.
- 4.5 The opinion of an internationally renowned Consultant haematologist and Professor of haematology was that the care Peter Redfern received in connection with his diagnosis and treatment of multiple myeloma was excellent and appropriate. In particular, he had been given all possible information and had received more than adequate support from the haematology team.
- 4.6 The Panel also noted that once the diagnosis of multiple myeloma had been confirmed, Peter Redfern was provided with contact details of the haematology team and was told about the self-referral policy of the department, something he actually made use of. He was also given a patient information pack including a booklet on myeloma, information about the drugs trial, a generic chemotherapy booklet, a key worker booklet, Macmillan cancer information, support leaflets and a Rotherham cancer centre booklet.
- 4.7 He said that in his long and extensive experience of using very high doses of steroids, only a small number of patients experienced extreme mood swings and very few had to be admitted with steroid associated confusion which is sometimes associated with aggressive behaviour. He added that the confusion and psychiatric symptoms rapidly resolve once the patient ceases taking the steroids.
- 4.8 The expert noted that Peter Redfern had not taken any medication for a period of 6 days prior to 22nd July. In his opinion, it was very unlikely that the steroids he had been taking would have affected him that day.

- 4.9 Some of the sentencing Judge's comments have been included in the DHR Overview Report, but the following is of particular relevance to the issue of the medication prescribed to Peter Redfern:
'The prosecution have accepted that your killing of your wife constituted manslaughter on the basis of diminished responsibility. They have done so on the basis that there is expert medical evidence to the effect that as a result of the drugs which you had been taking you were suffering from depression, which is a recognised medical condition, that this can lead to impulsive conduct and impairment of judgement, and that on the balance of probabilities you killed your wife on impulse when your mental functioning was abnormally affected in this way. Precisely how or why this happened may never be known.'
- 4.10 The Judge added, *'... In your case the sentence on count 1 [the manslaughter of Jean] is in a sense academic in view of the life sentence which you must serve on count 2 [the murder of Sarah], but once again the sentence is important in order to mark the gravity of your offence and the precious and irreplaceable nature of human life.'*
- 4.11 According to the police, there were several discrepancies between Peter Redfern's version of events that day and what the physical and forensic evidence indicated. That, plus the fact that Peter Redfern had not been on any medication for 6 days prior to the 22nd July, led the Overview Panel to believe that the prosecution would probably not have accepted a plea of guilty to the manslaughter of Jean on the basis of diminished responsibility had her killing been the only count on the indictment. The Panel believes the prosecution took into account the fact that Peter Redfern would inevitably be sentenced to life imprisonment for Sarah's murder and that there was no justification therefore in putting the surviving family through the trauma of enduring a contested trial.
- 4.12 One side of the family believes that Peter Redfern was of diminished responsibility because of the drugs he had been taking; the other side does not. Again, to avoid adding to the conflict within the family, the Panel has chosen not to discuss in the open report what it considers to have been the pragmatic approach adopted by the prosecution.