



## **Domestic Abuse Related Death Review**

### **Overview Report**

#### **Death of Janina**

**Aged: 33 years.**

**Died: May 2022**

**Independent Panel Chair and Author Theresa Breen MA**

Section	Title	Page no
	Contents page	2
1	Introduction	3
2	Timescales	4
3	Confidentiality	4
4	Terms of Reference	5
5	Methodology	7
6	Involvement of Family, Friends, Work Colleagues, Wider Community	9
7	Contributors to the Review	20
8	The Review Panel Members	21
9	Author and Chair of the Overview Report	21
10	Parallel Reviews	22
11	Equality and Diversity	23
12	Dissemination	27
13	Background, Overview and Chronology	28
14	Analysis	36
15	Conclusions	52
16	Learning	53
17	Recommendations	57

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report of a Domestic Abuse Related Review (formerly Domestic Homicide Review) examines agency responses and support given to Janina<sup>1</sup>, a resident of Lincolnshire prior to the point of her death in May 2022.

1.2 Janina was a Lithuanian national who had lived in the UK for over 10 years. Janina was a young mother of three children, who was resident of a small market town. She was married to her partner Jonas<sup>2</sup> for 10 years having been together for almost 14 years at the time of her death. Jonas was the father of her three children.

1.3 On a night in April 2022, Janina and Jonas had gone out with three friends to celebrate Jonas's birthday at a nightclub. The evening began with the group all attending Janina and Jonas's property for food and alcohol, before moving on to the nightclub. Later, during the course of the evening, an angry verbal disagreement occurred when Jonas became angry and upset as he believed that Janina was dancing with and hugging one of their male friends. They travelled home in a taxi with friends and Jonas was shouting at Janina. The friends dropped Janina and Jonas at home at about 01.30 hrs the following day, which was where their three children were being looked after by babysitters who left shortly afterwards.

1.4 The eldest child<sup>3</sup> describes at some time overnight, they heard a noise, got out of bed, and spoke to their father. Jonas told the child to return to bed but instructed them to call a family friend Laima<sup>4</sup>, when they got up later, and gave the child the mobile phone. When the child called Laima later that day, she went to the house and on entering, discovered the lifeless bodies of Janina and Jonas. Laima called the police.

1.5 The subsequent police investigation concluded that Jonas had murdered Janina. Jonas had then taken his own life.

1.6 In addition to agency involvement, the review will also examine the past to identify any relevant background or trail of abuse before the homicide, whether Janina accessed support within the community and whether there were any barriers to accessing support. By taking a holistic approach the review seeks to identify appropriate solutions to make the future safer.

1.7 The review will consider agencies' contact and involvement with Janina and Jonas from 01.12.2012 when the family moved to the UK, until the date of the incident. The reason for this extended timescale was that there was limited agency information known. Janina and Jonas are known to have entered the UK during December 2012 and this is the first period that there was information from services. It was known that they had a young child at this point so it was considered that the wider period would allow for information from services who may have had contact with Janina and Jonas and their children to create an understanding of the family dynamic, their lives, communities, and support networks.

1.8 The intention of the review is to ensure agencies are responding appropriately to victims of domestic abuse by offering and putting in place appropriate support mechanisms, procedures, resources and interventions with the aim of avoiding future incidents of domestic

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<sup>1</sup> A pseudonym chosen by the DARDR panel.

<sup>2</sup> A pseudonym chosen by the DARDR panel.

<sup>3</sup> Account taken from police body worn video and later transcribed.

<sup>4</sup> A pseudonym chosen by the DARDR panel.

homicide, violence and abuse. Reviews should assess whether agencies have sufficient and robust procedures and protocols in place, and that they are understood and adhered to by their employees.

1.9 One of the operating principles for this review has been to be guided by compassion, and empathy, with Janina's 'voice' at the heart of the process. Any review should seek to articulate the life through the eyes of the victim. As this report starts, the Review Panel would like to express its sympathy to Janina's and Jonas's families, specifically to their children and, also their friends for their loss. It also recognises, the distress experienced by the perpetrator's family, particularly those who knew Janina. This was a shocking tragedy for the family, and through the Chair, the Panel offer heartfelt condolences for their loss.

**Note:**

1.10 It is not the purpose of this DARDR to enquire into how Janina and Jonas died. That is a matter that has already been examined by the Senior Investigation Officer (SIO) during the Police investigation and during an inquest held by the Lincolnshire Coroner.

## **2. Timescales**

2.1 The review began on 25.05.2022 and was concluded in December 2023 following final consultation with the panel. See paragraph 5 for further details.

## **3. Confidentiality**

3.1 During panel, the Chair explained that all information discussed at DARDR panel is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed by panel members to third parties without discussion and agreement with the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP)/DARDR Chair. The disclosure of information outside these meetings would be considered as a breach of the subject's confidentiality and a breach of the confidentiality of the agencies involved. The findings of each review are confidential until publication. Information is available only to participating officers, professionals, and their line manager.

3.2 The use of pseudonyms is the normal convention to protect the anonymity of individuals and/or families. The family of the victim would normally influence the choice of pseudonym. The victim's family were contacted by the Chair, via the police Family Liaison Officer (FLO). It was agreed that they would be in contact after the inquest.

3.3 Understandably, the family were in deep distress and had taken over the care of the three young children, and so they did not respond to later contact and did not inform the choice of pseudonyms. The Chair chose the pseudonym's used in this report from a list of popular names relevant to the subjects' country of origin and, they have been used to protect the identity of all the subjects of the review. These are listed in two tables below and explain the relationship to Janina.

3.3.1 Table 1 (explained further in section 5.8 and 5.9)

<b>Pseudonyms:</b>	<b>Relationship to Janina</b>	Police interviews / statements reviewed in the DARDR <sup>5</sup>
Janina	N/A	n/a
Jonas	Husband- perpetrator	n/a
Child 1	Eldest child	Yes - taped interview transcript - not spoken to by report author
Laima	Best Friend / work colleague	Yes- written statement - not spoken to by report author
Ema	Friend. Sister to Laima	Yes - written statement - not spoken to by report author
Ona	Friend -married to Petras	Yes - taped interview transcript - not spoken to by the report author
Petras	Gym friend- married to Ona	Yes - taped interview transcript - not spoken to by the report author
Aras	Gym Friend	Yes - taped interview transcript and written statement - not spoken to by the report author

3.3.2 Table 2 (explained further in section 5.1)

<b>Pseudonyms:</b>	<b>Relationship to Janina</b>	Interview with report author <sup>6</sup>
Frank	Gym Owner	No police statement taken – telephone interview with the author
Greg	Gym Owner	No police statement taken – telephone interview with the author
Helen	Employer	No police statement taken – telephone interview with the author

3.3.3 Janina was 33 years old at the time of this fatal incident. She was of white European ethnicity.

3.3.4 Jonas was 40 years old at the time of this incident. He was of white European ethnicity.

#### 4. Terms of Reference

4.1 The panel considered the TOR in the Home Office statutory guidance and also the specific TOR set out at 4.5 below agreed the Terms of Reference at the meeting on 13.01.2023.

<sup>5</sup> Denotes the Police statements and taped interviews (which were later transcribed) that were taken during the police investigation, and also served the Coroner’s Inquest. They were disclosed by the police panel member to the to the DARDR Chair to serve a statutory purpose.

<sup>6</sup> The interviewees were contacted and spoken to by the author, not seen by police. See detail at section 5.1.

4.2 The purpose of the DARDR is to:

- Establish what lessons are to be learned from the domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims.
- Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result.
- Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to inform national and local policies and procedures as appropriate.
- Prevent domestic violence and homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence and abuse victims and their children by developing a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to ensure that domestic abuse is identified and responded to effectively at the earliest opportunity.
- Contribute to a better understanding of the nature of domestic violence and abuse.
- and highlight good practice.

4.2.1 (Multi-Agency Statutory guidance for the conduct of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews 2016 section 2 paragraph 7)

4.3 The aim of the DARDR is to identify the most important issues to enable lessons to be learned from homicides with a view to preventing homicide and ensuring that individuals and families are better supported. In order for these lessons to be learned as widely and thoroughly as possible, professionals need to be able to understand fully what happened in each homicide, and most importantly, what needs to change in order to reduce the risk of such tragedies happening in the future.

#### 4.4 **Timeframe under Review**

4.4.1 The review will cover the individuals listed at Section 2 above. The scope for this review is listed in the Terms of Reference, and the reason for this period is the victim and the perpetrator appear to have entered the UK during this time and this is the first period that we have information from services. It is also apparent that they have a young child at this point so to create an understanding of the family dynamic will be critical to understanding their lives, communities, and support networks.

#### 4.5 **Case specific Terms**

##### **Subjects of the DARDR**

Victim: Janina, aged 33

Victim's children: three children - all primary school age

Perpetrator: Jonas, aged 40

4.5.1 **Specific terms:** Key Lines of Inquiry:

4.5.2 The Review Panel and Chair considered the ‘generic issues’ as set out in statutory guidance and were asked to examine the following case specific issues.

- **To examine patterns of abuse and coercive and controlling behaviours<sup>7</sup> perpetrated by the perpetrator against the victim.**
- **To consider how women with additional needs (Language<sup>8</sup>/Diversity) who are experiencing domestic abuse access information, services, and support.**
- **To examine the impact of COVID 19, in particular lockdowns, on both an individual’s ability to access information and support and agency responses.**
- **To consider potential gaps in service provision, alongside potential barriers to accessing services. Significantly, it was noted by the panel that the period under review and the months leading up to the death were during the COVID<sup>9</sup> lockdown periods, which will be examined during this report.**

4.5.3 The Review Panel and Chair discussed and agreed additional enquiries that the Chair would pursue with friends and family members:

- Whether family, friends or colleagues were aware of any abusive behaviour from the alleged perpetrator to the victim, prior to the homicide, and whether this had been shared, by them, with professionals.
- Whether there were any previous victims of Jonas.
- Whether there were safeguarding concerns in relation to the children.

4.5.4 The author was unable to make contact and interview any friends or family members (listed at 3.3.1) and was therefore unable to secure separate commentary from them, to answer the additional enquiries. The author therefore relied on the content of their police statements to address lines of enquiry.

## 5. Methodology

5.1 Following the death of Janina and Jonas, a formal notification was sent by Lincolnshire Police to the SLP on 13.05.2022, with an explanation that the case was being examined as a homicide. A data trawl was commissioned which assisted the decision making to conduct a DARDR. Seventeen (17) agencies were approached during the data trawl and twelve (12) reported a nil return.<sup>10</sup> A meeting of the DARDR decision panel, on 25.05.2022, confirmed that the case met the DARDR criteria, and the Home Office was informed.

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<sup>7</sup> In March 2013, the Government introduced a cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse, which is designed to ensure a common approach to tackling domestic violence and abuse by different agencies. The Serious Crime Act 2015 (the 2015 Act) received royal assent on 3 March 2015. The Act creates a new offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships (section 76).

<sup>8</sup> The victim was a Lithuanian National who spoke Lithuanian as a first language and English as a second language.

<sup>9</sup> Listed at Appendix 1

<sup>10</sup> A Domestic Abuse Related Review (DARDR) means a review of the circumstances in which the **death of a person aged 16 or over has**, or appears to have, **resulted from violence, abuse, or neglect** by— **a person to**

5.2 Delays were encountered with identifying and securing an author and subsequently on 10.10.2022, Theresa Breen was appointed as Independent Chair and Author.

5.3 The review began in November 2022, with meetings with the SLP to discuss and agree proposed panel attendees and agree dates. The initial panel meeting was held on 13.01.2023, and panel members determined the period the review would cover. The panel also determined which agencies would be required to submit written information and in what format. Those agencies with substantial contact were asked to produce Independent Management Reviews (IMRs).

5.4 No immediate, urgent interventions or actions were identified by panel members and timescales were set for submission of the Chronologies/IMR's.

5.5 A mixture of IMR and summary information was received from agencies. IMR's were compiled by an agency representative independent of line management of the case.

5.6 An agency narrative or summary is completed by an agency rather than an IMR when it has been decided collectively by the DARDR panel that not enough involvement has occurred with the victim, perpetrator, or children. However, the panel believes that whilst a full IMR is not warranted, the agency may hold information of relevance to the Review. These were discussed at panel with comments sought from all agencies via a feedback loop to the Chair to inform analysis and the writing of an initial draft of the overview report.

5.7 From the returns, it appeared that very little interaction with agencies had taken place. The content of the IMR's is discussed at section 14 under analysis.

5.8 The other material that was relied upon in this review was transcripts of police interviews and statements made to police at the time of the incident<sup>11</sup> which were submitted as part of inquest file. The author was unable to persuade any of the witnesses who spoke to police, to speak face to face to contribute to this review, which was understandable considering the circumstances of the deaths. Their interview summaries or statements were shared by police for a statutory purpose (DARDR), so these accounts were viewed as 'statements of truth'. They had been submitted to the inquest process and accepted by the Coroner. The interviews and statements included that of Janina's closest friend, and the people who were with Janina and Jonas on the night of the murder-suicide. Their statements were used for the purpose of giving an account of the circumstances leading up to the murder-suicide to enable the Coroner to decide on the cause of death.

5.9 The author cross-referenced each interview summary and/or statement with those of the other witnesses, drawing inferences from the described behaviours and actions. It is not the role of the DARDR panel to produce evidence of the level 'beyond reasonable doubt.' That is the role of the police. It is sufficient to look at information on the 'balance of probabilities' to draw an inference from the information, which is what the author (on behalf of

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whom he/she was related or **with whom he/she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship**, or a member of the same household as himself, held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death.

<sup>11</sup> These are listed in Section 3.



the panel) did in this case for the purpose of informing learning. Where information is so strikingly similar, the author considers it supports information disclosed by other witnesses.

5.10 The Chair approached and spoke with three individuals who are listed at section 3 in this report. Those witnesses (who were known to Janina) were not interviewed by police, so did not provide police statements. Their accounts are listed at section 6. In the case of a DARDR, it is not unusual for other friends and family to be approached by an author to assist the DARDR process. The statutory guidance states, '*The benefits of involving family, friends and other support networks include.... obtaining relevant information held by family members, friends and colleagues which is not recorded in official records. Although witness statements and evidence given in court can be useful sources of information for the review, separate and substantive interaction with families and friends may reveal different information to that set out in official documents*'<sup>12</sup>. The author offered the opportunity to conduct the interviews with those who had not been involved in the police investigation, in order to understand how Janina and Jonas interacted with others and in the community. The author offered an interview over Teams video conferencing, but each decided to contribute through a telephone interview. The author took hand-written notes of the discussions and summarised their contributions for this report.

5.11 The panel met 4 times by Teams Video conferencing, with additional work being carried out by telephone and email exchange. Thereafter, a draft Overview Report was produced which was discussed and refined at panel meetings before being agreed.

## **6. Involvement of Family, Friends, Work Colleagues and Wider Community.**

### **6.1 Janina's family.**

6.1.1 Janina's family consists of her mother, father, and sister. Janina's parents live separately in Lithuania and do not speak English. Janina's sister does speak and write in English. She assisted the investigating team, as an intermediary to facilitate conversations with the police during their investigation. She also facilitated contact with her father on behalf of the author.

6.1.2 Janina's mother and sister attended the inquest where an interpreter was present. From the date of the incident, great care was taken not to re-traumatise the family members. The Family Liaison Officer (FLO) was tasked by the SLP to inform the family that a DARDR was to be undertaken and to provide relevant Home Office DARDR leaflet, and an Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse leaflet (AAFDA), translated in Lithuanian. This leaflet was shared with Janina's parents by her sister.

6.1.3 As the DARDR commenced, contact was made separately with Janina's family by letter to enable them to contribute to the process. The authors email contact details were passed to the family, and the letter(s) invited them to contact the Chair when they were ready. The FLO confirmed at that early stage that the Coronial process was their focus.

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<sup>12</sup> Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews- Section 52.e

6.1.4 A number of follow up attempts to engage with the family and share the Terms of Reference, were unsuccessful. The Chair sent a letter<sup>13</sup>, a follow up email<sup>14</sup> and with translated copies in Lithuanian, separately to Janina's mother, father, and sister. The panel were informed that that the FLO had also made further attempts to reach the family, who were in Lithuania, and they had not been responding to her police emails and calls.

6.1.5 The FLO clarified that the family focus was on the care and support to the three young children of the victim, who were now resident with the grandmother and sister in Lithuania. After the distressing and traumatic experience, this is a reasonable stance for the family to take. The panel decided that the next communication with the family should be when the report is completed and prior to publication. This communication took place by email, offering the option to discuss the report content and findings. The family (Janina's mother and sister separately) did not respond to the emails.

## 6.2 Janina and Jonas's children

6.2.1 Due to their young age and vulnerability, the children were not approached to be part of the DARDR process and were not spoken to by the author. The panel were alert to the potential re-traumatising of the children after their parents' tragic deaths. There is an account given by the eldest child, which was recorded on the police body worn video shortly after the murder-suicide<sup>15</sup>, and a later transcribed tape-recorded interview. Their account was viewed as part of the review of police statements, and a summary of that account is contained here.

6.2.2 The child reports that they heard a noise sometime between 06.00- 07.00 and went downstairs. They saw what they described to police as a 'fat man lying on the sofa' (this is believed by police to have been the body of Janina). Jonas told the child to go back to bed.

6.2.3 Jonas then went upstairs and spoke to the child. He told them that their mother had 'got drunk and banged her face on the wall and injured herself.' He also said that everyone was a bit drunk and mum 'was a bit flirty.' Jonas gave the child his mobile phone, telling the child not to come down, but to ring Laima (the family friend) when they woke-up later.

6.2.4 The eldest child rang Laima several hours later (believed to be shortly before 16.00 hours, as Laima made a 999 call to police at 16.09 hours). The children had been in the house until that time, believed alone with the bodies of their parents.

6.2.5 The other two children were not interviewed by the police or the author.

## 6.3 Jonas's family

6.3.1 Jonas's family consists of his mother, and brother who are both Lithuanian nationals living in the UK. Jonas's mother does not speak English; however, his brother speaks and writes English.

6.3.2 The author made contact separately with Jonas's family (mother and brother) by letter, which was sent by email, translated into Lithuanian to enable them to contribute to the process. The authors email and phone contact details were passed to the family by the FLO. Jonas's brother replied by email, to say he had no wish to be involved. The Chair sent a

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<sup>13</sup> An English version and a version translated into Lithuanian.

<sup>14</sup> In English and Lithuanian

<sup>15</sup> A summary of the account is contained as part of the summary facts at section 13.

follow up email, explaining the intention to learn lessons from the incident and leaving it open for re-engagement should he change his mind.

6.3.3 Of note, on the Notification Form submitted by the police to SLP, there is a comment recorded which indicates that Jonas's mother had been spoken to by police officers. There is no information that she provided a police statement. She is noted as saying, she was 'not close to Jonas' but revealed that a month before the incident that Janina had 'reassured her that if they split up, she would continue to allow her contact with her grandchildren'. The author was unable to confirm whether this comment had ever been shared by her with Jonas. From other witness records<sup>16</sup>, the panel were aware that Jonas and his mother were not close. In fact, Janina and Jonas had chosen to stay with friends rather than his mother when they first came to live in the UK. This comment attributed to Janina was not contained in a written police statement and cannot be independently verified by the author.

## 6.4 Friends

6.4.1 Janina had many friends which seemed at variance with Jonas. Jonas was described by witnesses as a loner. Janina had a best friend (Laima) and other friends from the gyms that she attended. From the information provided by those friends and work colleagues (described below), no one seems to have made any report to police of their suspicion of violence or domestic abuse or coercive control by Jonas against Janina. During the police investigation, police had interviewed several people who were close friends of Janina and some who had been with Janina and Jonas on the night of the murder. The police FLO obtained contact details for two of that group (Laima and Aras), who initially appeared willing to be interviewed by the DARDR author. They each later declined to be part of the DARDR process, and therefore the content of their statements or interviews could not be further explored. It is of note that none of the witnesses listed in this report had made any reports to an agency prior to the murder. It is entirely probable that they either didn't specifically understand or recognise the behaviors they witnessed as being coercive, controlling, or abusive in anyway, and importantly they did not perceive that Janina was at risk. It is also important to note that several witnesses observed that Janina also did not appear to recognise the risk that she may be vulnerable to. Their individual observations are listed below.

### Laima

6.4.2 Laima is a Lithuanian national who has been resident in the UK for over 10 years. She was Janina's closest friend. They had been friends since they were 6/7 years old. She was also a close work colleague, working in the same care home as Janina. She had additionally assisted in looking after Janina and Jonas's children on many occasions. Laima made a statement to police post event, which was used to inform the inquest. A number of attempts by the author were made to speak with her, however, Laima initially did not respond to the contact via email, WhatsApp or to messages passed to her through her employer. When she responded via email, she explained that she was still understandably traumatised, and felt unable to speak to the author in person or to add anything further that was not in her police statement. She stated she hoped the content of her police statement would help. She felt unable to be further involved in the DARDR process.

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<sup>16</sup> Notably Laima's statement

6.4.3 Laima's police statement was reviewed by the author to provide information for this DARDR. Laima had made no reports to an agency prior to the murder. Laima had been Janina's best friend for years, having met as children where they lived in the same apartment block in Lithuania. Laima spoke English as a second language. Janina and Jonas had stayed with Laima and her husband when they initially came to the UK. Laima worked with Janina in the care home and saw her most days. She was Janina's true confidant, and they spoke every day. She provided the background information on Janina and Jonas's relationship.

6.4.4 Laima describes that, to her knowledge, there not being any domestic abuse or violence in the relationship, however the previous 2 years had been hard in the relationship. Uncomfortable with pregnancy weight gain, Janina had spent 2 years on a health and fitness challenge. Janina had dieted and attended a gym and a fight club, resulting in her losing a substantial amount of weight, getting fit and starting to receive attention from people at the gym. She went to the gym several times a week, alternating the times when Jonas looked after the children (either in the morning or evening). Janina felt confident in her newfound slim figure. Laima reports that Janina had told Jonas she did not love him anymore. Jonas was unhappy with her newfound confidence and the fact that she was receiving lots of compliments. Jonas is described by Laima as, not responding well to the compliments and becoming clingy and possessive towards Janina.

6.4.5 Laima stated that Jonas worked long hours and had no known friends. Janina and the children were his life outside work and occasionally he went to the gym. Apart from Laima, Jonas generally did not permit visitors to visit their home, including Janina's other friends. She opined that it was unusual that they had friends to visit their home on the night of the incident, and this only occurred because it was a milestone birthday. She reports that Jonas had not been out socially for about 7 years before the night of the murder-suicide. To her knowledge, he rarely drank alcohol and did not take drugs.

6.4.6 Laima was told by Janina that she intended to divorce Jonas and she was preparing him for life on his own, as she thought he was unable to do anything for himself. In her police statement she said that Janina and Jonas had been talking about divorce. Janina had told Laima that Jonas threatened to kill himself ('if you leave me, I will kill myself')<sup>17</sup>, but Janina did not think it was a serious threat as he had never 'touched' her. Because of this, Laima also did not believe the threat. The author was unable to pinpoint the exact dates these conversations took place, as she was unable to interview Laima. As her oldest childhood friend, and someone who saw Janina daily, Laima had no information that Jonas had ever assaulted or been abusive towards Janina. In his last days, Jonas was described by Laima as 'stressed all the time'. He was in her opinion, not aggressive but just appeared angry.

### **Emā (Laima's sister)**

6.4.7 Emā is a Lithuanian National resident in the UK. She is the younger sister of Laima and has known Janina since childhood. Due to the obvious distress and upset described by Laima and her reluctance to engage in the DARDR process, the author did not attempt to approach or speak with Emā personally, so as not to cause Emā (and/or any other

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<sup>17</sup> Source Laima's police statement.

friends or family) further upset. Ema made a statement to police post event. The content of her information was reviewed and informs this report. It generally supported Laima's account.

6.4.8 Ema stated that she knew that Janina was very unhappy. She said that Janina had told her personally that she was unhappy in her relationship and was preparing Jonas for divorce. Her statement content supported her sister Laima's account. The author was unable to pinpoint the exact dates these conversations or observations about their marriage took place, as she did not interview Ema.

## **Ona**

6.4.9 Ona is a Lithuanian National resident in the UK. Ona was interviewed by police as part of the murder enquiry. She refused to sign an official written statement, of the account she had given to police post the event, but her transcribed interview account was used for the inquest file. Due to the upset described by Ona and her refusal to sign a statement, the author did not attempt to speak with Ona personally. The content of her transcribed interview was reviewed and informs this report.

6.4.10 Ona knew Janina from the gym. She said she knew that Janina was unhappy. She also disclosed that Janina wanted a divorce as she had mentioned it to her personally several times and said she only stayed because of the children, and 'everyone knew' as she talked to everyone in their social circle. Ona was part of the group who were with Jonas and Janina at the nightclub on the night of the murder.

6.4.11 Ona informed police that she had seen Petras dancing closely with Janina in the club and become angry with her husband because she thought it was inappropriate. In her police statement, she claimed she had thrown a cocktail drink at her husband and called Janina a 'shit.' She said this commotion was observed by Jonas, so she informed Jonas that she had seen them hugging and kissing. She then later admitted to the police that she had exaggerated her observations, and that statement about them hugging and kissing was not true, but she had said so because she was angry with Petras. In her interview, she stated that it was her opinion that that Janina had danced with her husband in an attempt to make Jonas 'mad so that he would divorce her.' The author was unable to question this opinion or statement, as she was unable to interview Ona.

## **Petras**

6.4.12 Petras is a Lithuanian National resident in the UK. Petras was interviewed by police as a significant witness as part of the enquiry but later refused to sign an official statement. His interview was transcribed. Due to his refusal to sign a statement, the author did not attempt to speak with Petras personally. The content of his transcribed interview was reviewed and informs this report.

6.4.13 He knew Janina and Jonas for about two years and knew Janina from the gym. He said he knew that Janina was unhappy, and she described to him being 'disappointed in her marriage.' She had told him that Jonas was angry when she (Janina) went to the gym, and Jonas was alone all the time, and he wanted to spend more time with her. The author was unable to pinpoint the exact time these conversations took place with Janina, as she was unable to interview Petras.

6.4.14 Petras was also part of the group who were with Jonas and Janina at the nightclub on the night of the murder. Petras was a driver who worked extended hours so slept

3-4 hours nightly, so he described being susceptible to the effects of alcohol. He self-reported being very drunk that evening, and he described having drunk large amounts of whiskey (the whiskey bottle at Janina's house which they finished before going out was 50% proof<sup>18</sup>). His recollection in his police account was vague on specific details. He recalled that Jonas was angry at a point and was looking for Janina in the club, asking him, 'Where is my Janina?'. Later, Petras stated that Ona told Jonas she found Petras with Janina. Ona told him that she had seen him dancing with Janina, and then saw him 'hug and kiss her.' He did not recall dancing or hugging and kissing Janina as his wife had said (Ona later revealed to police in her statement that she had lied about the hugging and kiss). He stated that his wife Ona was a jealous woman. He did recall that Jonas was truly angry and unhappy in the club, as Jonas thought that Petras had 'hugged and kissed' Janina. He recalls that Jonas was shouting at Janina in the taxi coming home but had no recollection of what the actual words used, or content of the shouting was. It is unknown what the comments specifically were.

## **Aras**

6.4.15 Aras is a Lithuanian National resident in the UK. Aras refused to sign an official statement to police post event but was interviewed twice by the police, as part of the police enquiry. His interviews were transcribed, and the content analysed for this report. The author made attempts to speak with him after he initially agreed to a meeting, through the police contact. A number of calls were made to him, which went unanswered. The police panel representative described that he became reluctant and then declined to also answer calls to the police. The content of his transcribed interview was reviewed and informs this report.

6.4.16 He met Janina and Jonas at the gym and had known them for years. He described Janina as a friend.

6.4.17 Aras was part of the group who were with Janina and Jonas at the nightclub on the night of the murder. He states that everyone (Janina, Jonas, Petras and Aras) was sharing a whisky bottle at Janina and Jonas's house (Ona was drinking Malibu) and all continued drinking 'double whisky and cokes' in the club. He described the atmosphere as 'good', and everyone was relaxed. There came a point when Jonas was looking for Janina, asking him whether he had seen her. Aras believed that Jonas went to look for her at some stage. He described that Ona came to the table and said she has seen Petras 'hugging Janina'<sup>19</sup> and that she was really angry, but he could not recall if Jonas was present when she said that.

6.4.18 He recalls that in the taxi travelling home, Ona told Jonas that she had seen her husband Petras, 'hugging Janina', and he described the atmosphere in the taxi as 'tense'. Jonas asked Petras if it was true. Jonas then challenged Petras, asking 'why he had done that when he was supposed to be his friend?'. Petras kept saying that he 'was sorry and that he didn't mean to do it'. Although Aras's statement does not refer to anyone (specifically Jonas) being aggressive, he recalls that Jonas had tried to open the taxi door whilst it was still moving, causing the driver to stop the car at one point. When they arrived at Janina and Jonas's house, he got out of the taxi so the babysitters could use the taxi to go home and went into their house. Jonas then asked him to leave because he 'needed to speak to his wife.'

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<sup>18</sup> This is relevant as various witness statements referred to 'lots' of alcohol being drunk, but it was impossible to quantify the amount.

<sup>19</sup> Source Aras police statement.

6.4.19 Aras recalls previous conversations with Janina at the gym where she said she was unhappy in her marriage (these conversations are not dated) and she wanted a divorce from Jonas, claiming that she had to 'buy all of the food and Jonas didn't really do anything and couldn't look after himself.' She revealed that Jonas had said that if she were to divorce Jonas then he 'would hang himself'<sup>20</sup>. She had last said that about a year before the incident (exact date unknown).

6.4.20 Janina also told Aras that she was planning to go on holiday to Spain with some girlfriends and she revealed that Jonas was not very happy about it. She did not disclose any violence in their relationship other than to say that on one occasion before they were married<sup>21</sup> Jonas had 'beaten her up'<sup>22</sup> but she didn't give any other detail about this, and she never mentioned it again. This statement has not been explored further due to the author being unable to contact Aras. Neither Janina or Jonas were known to police in the UK or in Lithuania. There are no known police records that Janina made any report about this alleged attack. Laima made no reference to it in her statement. However, this does not mean that the assault did not occur, just that there is no agency record of it in either country.

6.4.21 Aras made his statement to police and is considered a statement of truth. His account was given in the Coroners file, supplied to family members in both Janina and Jonas's family. This information was not challenged or disputed by anyone. Whilst this information is not provided by any other witness, including her best friend, and cannot be corroborated, it is a relevant disclosure.

## 6.5 Gym Friends

### Frank - Gym owner

6.5.1 Whilst Frank was not interviewed by police, Frank was approached by the author and interviewed over the phone on three occasions and gave an open account of his knowledge of Janina and Jonas. Frank also knew Laima. Frank had a number of Lithuanian and Eastern European members at his gym. Janina was very close to his own daughter and trained with her at the gym. He said that Jonas was a 'loner, with no friends' and no interest in socialising. He described several incidents of note.

6.5.2 He said that Janina came to the gym regularly (3 days a week) and had been spending more time at the gym with new classes in the months before her death. He considered that it was her 'escape' from home. They chatted often when she was training. Between 2020-22, they had multiple conversations where she indicated she was unhappy with Jonas<sup>23</sup>. She once told him that Jonas would have to 'like it or lump it' because she loved the gym. On another occasion (date unknown), she arrived at the gym and was very 'off and distant' and when he asked her about it, Janina said that Jonas was 'unhappy that she had changed so much'. She trained hard and appeared happy before she left.

6.5.3 On another occasion, a night about a month before the murder<sup>24</sup>, Janina went to the gym and hung around to have a conversation with Frank at the end of training. She told him, that she did not love Jonas, and that he was jealous. She stated that Jonas said if she

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<sup>20</sup> Source Aras police statement.

<sup>21</sup> They were in a relationship between 2008-2010.

<sup>22</sup> This is a direct quote from Aras's police statement. He did not give any other detail about this.

<sup>23</sup> The author was unable to pinpoint the exact dates these conversations took place.

<sup>24</sup> The date cannot be confirmed.

left him, he would kill her. Janina told him that she was waiting for the youngest children to get a bit older before leaving and was looking for a second job to get money to support herself and the children, for when she left. She informed him that Jonas had told her multiple times that he would kill her and himself if she left him. Frank said that Janina rolled her eyes as she said it, and claimed she had 'heard it so many times' implying that she was de-sensitised to it<sup>25</sup>.

6.5.4 Frank did not think that Janina believed she would come to any harm. Because of her reaction, he was also unconcerned that she was at risk.

### **Greg - Gym owner**

6.5.5 Police did not interview Greg. Greg was contacted by the author, initially by email and then phone and agreed to be interviewed over the phone. He gave an open account of his knowledge of Janina and Jonas, who had been members of his gym for years. Greg also knew Laima. He described Jonas as quiet, he kept to himself, and made little conversation, would just say hello but not converse<sup>26</sup>. He described Janina as 'very happy and outgoing.'

6.5.6 Janina and Jonas never came into the gym together as they took it in turns to have the children. He described that after Janina lost her weight, she became much more confident, started doing kick-boxing classes. He said from an 'outsiders' point of view, she was attracting 'a lot of male attention'. He had not seen either of them in the 6 months before the murder, so was unable to add anything further.

## **6.6 Employer Contacts**

### **Helen (employer contact and manager)**

6.6.1 Helen worked as a manager at the care home where Janina and Laima both worked. Helen was not interviewed by police. She was approached by the author, initially by email, and then phone and agreed to be interviewed. Helen gave an open account of her knowledge of Janina. She described her as a hard and dedicated worker. Janina had been an essential worker during the COVID period and had attended work on all expected shifts. She explained that Laima and Janina worked together at the care home. Janina was always on time, a committed worker but she had made no disclosures of any kind that could have revealed any concerns about abuse at home, or any difficulties in her relationship.

### **Employer contact for Jonas**

6.6.2 Jonas worked in a factory in Lincolnshire. His employers were contacted as part of this review via phone, email and with follow up calls, to explain the purpose of the review and the role they could play in it. After being provided with the HO 'leaflet for employers', and having internal management discussions, they decided not to contribute to the review. There is no legal requirement for them to be involved or contribute.

## **6.7 Wider Community**

6.7.1 The DARD panel was keen to ensure that they consulted with people with knowledge of the Lithuanian community in Lincolnshire. Despite attempts to seek local

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<sup>25</sup> Source: Account taken from Franks police statement.

<sup>26</sup> See notes at section 11.10.4



representation for the panel, it proved difficult to obtain support and there were no identified Lithuanian members who could support the panel, either through the police contacts, Independent Advisory Groups (IAG's), or in the wider community. The Chair sought to obtain support from AAFDA and the National Domestic Abuse Team, to assist with understanding of cultural or diversity issues that may be relevant in this review. They were unable to provide any assistance.

6.7.2 Enquiries with Frank and Greg who suggested that whilst there was a large Lithuanian community in Lincolnshire, there was no recognised community group which Janina had associated with.

6.7.3 The author was able to identify a member of police staff of Lithuanian nationality who worked in the Metropolitan Police area, who agreed to assist the panel with her knowledge and experience of Lithuanian culture. She had moved to the UK in 2008 to attend university, eventually settling permanently here. She has current family links with, and knowledge of Lithuania and has visited regularly (several times a year), since her settlement in the UK. She is member of a national Lithuanian Facebook group.

6.7.4 She is a serving police staff manager and had also worked as a Special Constable in policing so has an awareness and knowledge of domestic abuse law in the UK and lived experience from growing up in Lithuania. She said that stigma had prevented women from disclosing their abusive relationships and the culture for recognising and challenging domestic abuse and associated behaviours was culturally many years behind other European countries.

6.7.5 She explained to the author that Lithuanian history played a significant role in the reality and perception of domestic abuse in Lithuania. Lithuania used to be under communist control and occupation by Russian forces (Soviet Union) and only had independence fully in 1991. She told the author of the report that from her experience, the Russian culture was brutal and dominated by alcohol, and it was common for families in Lithuania to experience violence and emotional and financial abuse, which was passed on generationally. Apart from the night of the murder it is notable in this DARDR, alcohol was not a feature and Jonas was understood to rarely drink<sup>27</sup>.

6.7.6 Lithuanian families were generally keen to present a picture of a happy family to the outside world, and not reveal their experiences through shame or stigma, although it is notable that in this case, Janina did not present a 'happy family' image to her friends or associates. Religion (Catholicism) was thought to play a potential role in keeping families together. Cultural prejudice from small town or country living versus more liberal city living can fuel concerns for women around shame and perceived prejudices. There is a stigma associated with divorce which is perceived to be the female's fault. Shame prevents women from speaking out. She said it was common for females in Lithuania to accept domestic abuse as part of their life, because they have witnessed it over many years. A lack of understanding of the impact of financial, emotional, and abusive controls keeps women in relationships as they see no way out.

6.7.7 She told the author of the report that there are additional factors in relation to Lithuanian women living in the UK. Factors here may include that they lack money, childcare,

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<sup>27</sup> Source Laima's police statement.

and other support networks if they have relocated to the UK without family members to assist with childcare and other support. In Lithuania, stigma may delay the separation, but a lack of support networks in the UK actually discourages the move. Combined with a difficulty in dealing with official agencies when English is not their first language, accessing available information that aids or provides accommodation, financial support and child/ caring help, Lithuanian women suffering from domestic abuse may feel isolated and as a result quickly rekindle their relationship, or not even leave. Women struggle to understand how they can be independent without the financial support of a man, even if he is abusive or controlling.

6.7.8 There is an absence about domestic abuse on the Lithuanian embassy web account, where women would search for help. In general, she believes there to be a lack of knowledge in the local Lithuanian community about how agencies would respond to domestic abuse: fears about children being taken away are based on Lithuanian rather than UK experiences.

6.7.9 Another factor that creates concern is the publicity surrounding the change in authority approach in Lithuania. Authorities have in the past two years moved to become proactive in domestic abuse situations which have caused some media scandals where children have been removed from the home where domestic abuse is suspected and have taken up to two years for the children to be returned. Unlike the UK system where children's services work to support families experiencing DA, Lithuanian women fear losing their children due to lengthy investigations. Families did not want to engage with the authorities due to fear and suspicion.

6.7.10 At the time of the incident, Janina and Jonas had been in the UK for 10 years, but they would have brought their culture and diversity from Lithuania, and immediately settled with other Lithuanian friends. They were described<sup>28</sup> as being 'well integrated' in the community where they settled in Lincolnshire. They both worked, Jonas in a factory and Janina in a care home. They attended a gym where they mixed with British, and others of Eastern European backgrounds. All of the children attended British schools and spoke fluent English. Although Janina did not present in a way that others may perceive her to be a victim, Janina was still a Lithuanian national and would therefore have been impacted by her cultural exposure in her native country whilst growing up. Environmental factors could have influenced her choices and decisions and may have influenced her decision making in the UK. The way that Janina presented to friends and acquaintances was in contrast to the generalised view of Lithuanian females (described at 6.7.7). In this case, financial dependence was a factor in her decision making and Janina had indicated that she was waiting to 'save enough money' to support herself and the children. Stigma did not appear to concern her, as she spoke openly about her intent to leave. Whilst she did not have a family support network, she had close contact with Laima. Janina also did not present with any concerns about domestic abusive behaviours.

## 6.8 Academic research

6.8.1 There is a dearth of academic research in the UK concerning domestic abuse in the Lithuanian communities across the UK. (Section 6.7.7 refers to the experience of a Lithuanian contributor to this review). In June 2022, however, the first UK wide research was

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<sup>28</sup> Laima and Franks' police statements

published. The Lincoln University and Edan Lincs research project<sup>29</sup> had been cited in another DARD with Lithuanian links and is cited by Vesta<sup>30</sup>. The research concerned domestic abuse within the Polish community living in the UK and explored Polish women's experiences. Whilst it does not specifically cite the experiences of Lithuanian women, the potential similarities in Eastern European countries and culture made this research relevant for consideration. It focussed on investigating the barriers to (eastern European) women seeking help for domestic abuse. Whilst focussed on the Polish community, the research also covers Lithuanian and Bulgarian communities. The published work contained some insightful commentary on the challenges that Eastern European women encounter, following their migration to the UK.

6.8.2 The findings highlighted the women's experiences of domestic abuse in the UK, coupled with intersecting disadvantages arising from gender, class, migration histories and immigration status. Many of these findings had been expressed as similar by the police staff member.

6.8.3 The research highlighted that domestic abuse is poorly recognised in Poland. The Polish government is critical of domestic abuse and women's rights campaigns as undermining traditional values, the sanctity of marriage and Polish identity. There is a culture of families staying together whatever their situation. This is especially so when there are children in the relationship. (Janina had expressed her concerns about leaving the relationship as the children were so young). This can result in the wider family not being supportive of a woman who wants to leave a relationship, which may in turn cause a feeling of isolation.

6.8.4 The research revealed, there is limited recognition of non-physical forms of abuse in Polish law and overall neglect of domestic abuse in state policy with funding cuts for services and the threat to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women. It is difficult to measure the prevalence of domestic abuse amongst Polish women in the UK because crime survey data do not disaggregate by country of birth. Polish women are over-represented in femicide statistics in the UK.

6.8.5 There is low awareness in the community of what constitutes domestic abuse, so the additional challenge for a victim is the recognising, disclosing and seeking help, both from formal services and from their familial and social networks. Women's responses to abuse came from a lack of awareness about service responses to domestic violence and abuse in the UK, language barriers and a strong fear and mistrust of services prolonged their entrapment within the potentially abusive relationship. Socio-cultural and Polish Catholic Church norms about women's roles within families and the shame and stigma of divorce.

6.8.6 The report's recommendations were developed by contextualising the research findings in the current practice and policy context for domestic abuse provision, including funding cuts to domestic abuse and social services in the past ten years, tighter eligibility for public funds and hostile immigration policies. Many points were considered highly relevant to other groups of minoritised women (Lithuanian) and all victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

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<sup>29</sup> Zielinska, I., Anitha, S., Rasell, M. and Kane, R. (2022) Polish women's experiences of domestic violence and abuse in the UK. Interim research report. Lincoln: EDAN Lincs and University of Lincoln.

<sup>30</sup> Vesta- Specialist Family Support CIC- formerly Polish Domestic Violence Helpline.

6.8.7 Summarising, the report stated that domestic abuse is a global issue and just over a quarter (27%) of women who have been in a relationship, report being subject to physical and/or sexual abuse by their intimate partner (WHO, 2021). The research appeared limited as it does not seem to focus on the cultural and diversity challenges faced by many non- British born victims of abuse in the UK.

## 7. Contributors to the Review/ Agencies submitting IMR's<sup>31</sup>

7.1 Agency	Contribution
Lincolnshire Police	Brief information/ police statements
LCC <sup>32</sup> Children's Health Services	IMR
LCC Education	IMR
United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT)	IMR Summary Report
Lincolnshire ICB/GP practice	IMR
Lincolnshire Housing	Chronology

7.2 The Home Office Guidelines make it clear that IMR should include a comprehensive chronology that charts the involvement of the agency with the victim and perpetrator over the period of time set out in the 'Terms of Reference' for the review. It should summarise: the events that occurred; intelligence and information known to the agency; the decisions reached; the services offered and provided to the subjects of the review; and any other action taken.

7.3 Each IMR author had no previous knowledge of the subjects of the review nor had any involvement in the provision of services to them. They were selected as people independent from any clinical or line management supervision for any of the practitioners who provided care for them and could provide an analysis of events that occurred; the decisions made; and the actions taken or not taken.

7.4 They were quality assured by the author and panel Chair, the respective agency, and by panel's legal advisor who carried out a quality audit of all IMRs and summary reports.

**Lincolnshire Police** had **no information** (intelligence or information) on the family members prior to the incident. No criminal records are noted. They did however submit the Notification Form to LCC as Lead Agency (at 6.3.3). No IMR was required.

**East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS)** had **no information** on the family prior to the incident. They noted the incident as the only call to the address. No IMR was required.

**LCC Children's (Social Care) Services** had **no information** on the family prior to the incident.

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<sup>31</sup> Individual Management Reviews (IMRs) are detailed written reports from agencies on their involvement with Janina, Jonas and their 3 children.

<sup>32</sup> Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)

## **8. The Review Panel Members**

Theresa Breen	Independent Chair and Report Author
Sarah Norburn	DA Coordinator, Lincolnshire Police
Julia Miller	Housing Options Manager, North Kesteven District Council
Rebecca Pinder	Head of Safeguarding Children, Lincolnshire ICB
Elaine Todd	Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children & Young People, United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust (ULHT)
Rachel Freeman	Head of Service, LCC Children's Services
Dawn Waring	Locality Health Manager, LCC Children's Health
John O'Connor	Head of Service, LCC Education Support
Jane Keenlyside	MARAC Manager, EDAN Lincs - DA Specialist Services
Liz Cudmore	Children & Young Person Safeguarding Lead, East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS)

### **SLP/LSCP Support**

Jade Thursby/Ann Beck	DA Business Manager, LCC
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### **Legal Adviser to the Panel**

Toni Geraghty	Assistant Chief Legal Officer, Legal Services Lincolnshire
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### **DARDR Administrator**

Teresa Tennant	Senior Business Support Officer, LCC Business Support
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8.1 The Chair of the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership was satisfied that the Panel Chair and Author were independent. In turn, the Panel Chair believed there was sufficient independence and expertise on the panel to examine the events and prepare an unbiased report safely and impartially. Panel members had not previously been involved with the subjects or line management of those who had.

## **9. Author and Chair of the Overview Report**

9.1 Sections 36 to 39 of the Home Office Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews December 2016 sets out the requirements for review Chairs and Authors. In this case, the Chair and Author was the same person.

9.2 Theresa Breen was selected as the Chair of the Review Panel and Author of the report. She retired from British Policing (not Lincolnshire) in November 2018, after 30 years. As a former senior police officer, she worked across a range of policing disciplines,

including Serious Organised Crime, Counter Terrorism and Safeguarding in management positions. She gained experience of reviews working extensively in partnership with other agencies and had experience of working with Eastern European communities. She was a trained Senior Investigating Officer (SIO).

9.3 She worked across a number of Public Protection and Safeguarding portfolios in London and Surrey, managing and overseeing MAPPA<sup>33</sup> and MARAC<sup>34</sup> processes. As the police Public Protection lead in Westminster, she managed and oversaw Domestic Abuse services, to diverse communities. As a Borough Commander in a West London Borough, she was the core police member of the Safer and Stronger Strategy Group. Operating as 'Gold London<sup>35</sup>,' Theresa had overall strategic command of multiple incidents including those involving domestic abuse and homicide.

9.4 Working in partnership, Theresa additionally led the national police implementation of the cross-agency Operational Improvement Review (OIR) recommendations following the terrorist activities across the UK in 2017/18. Theresa has not worked for any agency in Lincolnshire and has no connection with any of the agencies involved in this review. She has completed the relevant Home Office DARDR Chair training.

9.5 Theresa has been the Chair and Author for 10 DARDRs and is a current Chair and Author for the new OWHR<sup>36</sup> pilot process. She is a trainer for Sancus Solutions, delivering safeguarding and equality training, and delivered the OWHR training to over 80 delegates, including safeguarding and, equality and diversity input.

## 10. Parallel Reviews

10.1 A Coroner's inquest was conducted in this case, opening on 11.05.2023 and concluding on 16.05.2023. The findings have been used to inform this review.

10.2 In summary, the medical cause of death for Janina was described as '**ligature strangulation**'. The coroner concluded that Janina was murdered by her husband on 01.05.2022, when Jonas assaulted her causing significant injury and strangled her with a ligature which resulted in her death. The coroner concluded the death was '**unlawful killing**.'

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<sup>33</sup> MAPPA stands for Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, and it is the process through which various agencies such as the police, the Prison Service and Probation work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community.

<sup>34</sup> MARAC is a multi-agency meeting which facilitates the risk assessment process for individuals and their families who are at risk of domestic violence and abuse. Organisations are invited to share information with a view to identifying those at "very high" risk of domestic violence and abuse. Where very high risk has been identified, a multi-agency action plan is developed to support all those at risk.

<sup>35</sup> The generic command structure, nationally recognised, accepted and used by the police, other emergency services and partner agencies, is based on the gold, silver, bronze (GSB) hierarchy of command and can be applied to the resolution of both spontaneous incidents and planned operations.

<sup>36</sup> OWHR is Offensive Weapons Homicide Review is a Home Office pilot to deal with the under researched and reviewed area of homicides involving offensive weapons in 4 pilot sites across the UK.

10.3 The medical cause of death for Jonas was described as ‘**hanging**.’ The coroner described the circumstance, that Jonas ‘was found suspended by ligature on 01.05.2022, after he had just murdered his wife.’ The Coroner concluded the death was ‘**suicide**’.

10.4 A DARDR should not form part of any disciplinary inquiry or process. Where information emerges during the course of a DARDR that indicates disciplinary action may be initiated by a partnership agency, the agency’s own disciplinary procedures will be used; they should remain separate to the DARDR process.

## **11. Equality and Diversity**

11.1 The Review Panel considered the nine Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation) during the DARDR process in evaluating the services provided and have been regularly revisited throughout the Review.

11.2 Equality and diversity were also considered, when examining the ‘Key Findings from Analysis of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews’ September 2021 (hereafter the Home Office Analysis 2021) and looking for similarities and differences in the findings. The key information from 124 DARDRs which were reviewed by the Home Office quality assurance process for the 12 months from October 2019 is used to inform this review. The Author additionally considered the information from the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) data for the year ending March 202

11.3 In considering the characteristics presented in the Home Office Analysis 2021, the Author was mindful that approximately 60% of perpetrators<sup>37</sup> were known to have a previous offending history. Of these, three quarters had abused previous partners and one third, family members. This includes a small proportion who had abused both previous partners and family members. Jonas falls into the 40% with no known convictions. The below is a synopsis for each category:

### **Sex**

11.4 Sex always requires special consideration. Janina was female, and Jonas is male. CSEW data<sup>38</sup> showed that 1.7 million women experienced domestic abuse in the reporting period, which equates to 7 in 100 women. Domestic Abuse is a hidden crime that is often not reported to police.

11.5 From an examination of DARDRs<sup>39</sup>, Home Office records show that the majority (80%) of victims of domestic homicide were female and for perpetrators 83% were male. Additionally, in 73% of cases the perpetrator was the partner or ex-partner. Extensive analytical studies of domestic homicide in reviews reveal gendered victimisation across both intimate partner and familial homicides. Males represent the majority of perpetrators. Females represent the majority of victims.

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<sup>37</sup> Home Office Research- Key finding from Analysis of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews- October 2019- September 2020.

<sup>38</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseprevalenceandvictimcharacteristic>

<sup>39</sup> Home Office Research- Key finding from Analysis of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews- October 2019- September 2020.

11.6 As women statistically are more likely to be abused, sex is considered a vulnerability. There were no agency records of physical assault during this review and no specific information or intelligence held by agencies that Janina had been subject to any domestic abuse by Jonas. Whilst the incident cannot be corroborated, Janina made a disclosure to Aras<sup>40</sup> about a historic assault between 2008-2010, when they would have been resident in Lithuania, where Jonas had allegedly 'beaten her up'. No more detail was known, and this appears to have gone unreported. The author was unable to obtain any further information from Aras. Many of her friends<sup>41</sup>, who gave police witness statements or interviews, talk about her being subject to manipulative behaviours. As a woman the likelihood that she could have been a victim is high.

## Age

11.7 Janina was a 33-year-old woman at the time of her tragic death. Her husband Jonas was 7 years older (40). They had formed a relationship when she was a relatively young age (16yrs) and when he was 23 yrs. She was a teenager, and he was an adult when the relationship started. They moved in together when she was 18 years old. There was no information available to the panel which informed a view of their previous relationships or experience, but Janina's age would indicate less experience of a previous relationship.

11.8 Research suggests<sup>42</sup> that age difference can be seen to create a power imbalance. Whilst the age difference in this case, at the outset may have created a power imbalance, there was no evidence from friends or family to suggest there actually was and there was no evidence of Janina's lack of power within the relationship. The fact that they were in a relationship for a long period would suggest that they matured at an appropriate level.

11.9 From the Home Office Analysis 2021, the proportion of victims and perpetrators was examined in different age ranges. Studying the age of victims showed that Janina was of the average age of women to be more likely to be victims of any domestic abuse in the last year. For example, an estimated 28.4% of women aged 16 to 59 years have experienced some form of domestic abuse since the age of 16 years<sup>43</sup>.

## Disability

11.10 The Equality Act 2010 defines **disability** as: "A physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on a person's ability to do normal daily activities."

11.11 Whilst there is no information to suggest either Janina or Jonas fell into this definition relating to physical disability, or learning and communication difficulties, there is

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<sup>40</sup> Section 6.4.6

<sup>41</sup> See section 3.3.1- Laima, Ema, Ona, Petras, Aras and Greg.

<sup>42</sup> Körner, Robert and Schütz, Astrid, 07.03.2024: Power, Balance and Relationship Quality: An Overstated Link (07.03.2024) Social Psychological and Personality Science. And CEOP- Age Gap Relationships [https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/11\\_18/lets-talk-about/relationships/age-gap-relationships/#7-things-to-consider-about-age-gap-relationships](https://www.ceopeducation.co.uk/11_18/lets-talk-about/relationships/age-gap-relationships/#7-things-to-consider-about-age-gap-relationships).

Volpe EM, Hardie TL, Cerulli C, Sommers MS, Morrison-Beedy D. **What's age got to do with it? Partner age difference, power, intimate partner violence, and sexual risk in urban adolescents.** J Interpers Violence. 2013 Jul;28(10):2068-87.

Hokoda A, Martin Del Campo MA, Ulloa EC. **Age and Gender Differences in Teen Relationship Violence.** J Aggress Maltreat Trauma. 2012 April.

<sup>43</sup> Office of National Statistics, 2019



suggestion that Jonas was exhibiting some issues with his health including stress and anxiety prior to this murder. This was not being treated and did not have a formal diagnosis which would have suggested a disability.

11.12 Both Janina and Jonas had attended their GP for routine medical treatment. In terms of medical information, Jonas had reported in 2015 suffering from headaches for 5-6 months every year over a 10-year period<sup>44</sup>. These were linked to over-tiredness and diagnosed as migraines. These were not treated as a disability but were indicative of stress.

11.13 Neither Janina and Jonas had a known physical or mental impairment which would have meant they were disabled within the meaning of the Equality Act. It was decided that the Protected Characteristic of disability required no specific consideration in this report.

**Gender reassignment** – Not Applicable to this Review.

### **Marriage and civil partnership**

11.14 Janina and Jonas were married. There is limited information to examine in either Janina or Jonas's previous relationships. According to Laima, Janina met Jonas via the internet in 2008<sup>45</sup>, and there is no other information available to indicate a prior relationship, so it appears that Jonas was Janina's most significant relationship. They got together when she was 16, lived together when she was 18 and married in 2010.

11.15 Marriage was relevant to this review. Information from relatives and friends indicated that Jonas was desperate for the marriage to remain intact. Despite not taking part in this review, his brother communicated with the Chair, and it was his belief that, 'She (Janina) wanted a divorce, she wanted her husband to leave her, but he loved her and tried to save the relationship'. As his brother declined to be interviewed and did not provide any other clarity, the context of this statement is unclear and could not be explored further and it is not known if this was a view held pre the murder or a hindsight view formed after the murder.

11.16 Within the marital relationship, Janina is reported to have been responsible for managing their financial arrangements (paying the rent, bills, shopping), which she also disclosed to friends, whilst Jonas worked long hours. The panel considered economic abuse but as it was not ascertained if all the responsibilities and liabilities were in Janina's name, but the panel did consider language as a significant factor in this division of chores. Being formally married meant there were more legal and financial complications to any proposed separation.

11.17 Janina had no known former partners. According to witnesses (including Jonas's brother at 11.8.2), she had spoken openly and freely to many people about her desire for a divorce, explaining that she had told Jonas that she was unhappy and wanted a divorce. He wanted them to remain together. Jonas was insistent that he did not want to divorce.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

11.18 Janina was the mother of three primary school aged children at the time of the murder. As part of her health and maternity care, through routine enquiry, there is an

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<sup>44</sup> Source- GP chronology.

<sup>45</sup> According to Laima via her police statement

expectation that Janina would have been asked about any abuse within her relationship<sup>46</sup>. There is evidence throughout the IMRs that routine enquiry had been carried during her antenatal and post-natal appointments (this is explored in section 13). There are some records to indicate that when routine enquiry was carried out no allegations of abuse were made. Some records do not record the questions being asked. However, there is no information that she had revealed any concerns to professionals about abuse during any pregnancy.

11.19 The timings of the routine enquiries were 9 years before the incident. No risks were identified at that time. Janina was also asked on many other occasions and never made any disclosures, and specifically denied any issues when asked.

## Race

11.20 The 2021 census informs that the population in Lincolnshire is predominantly white (96%), with non-white minorities representing the remaining 4% of the population. Both Janina and Jonas were of white Lithuanian heritage. None of the panel were Lithuanian, so the cultural barriers are described from the contribution of the Lithuanian police staff member<sup>47</sup>.

11.21 The panel considered the relevance of Lithuanian culture and how it may have impacted on their lives. The cultural aspect of the experiences of Eastern European women being subject to domestic abuse has been referenced above at section 6.

11.22 Both Janina and Jonas had been in the UK for over 10 years at the time of the murder- suicide. Janina spoke good English (according to her employer and friends); however, it was still her second language. Whilst she communicated without interpreters, consideration as to her need for interpreters could have been noted in all agency records for clarity. The level of her reading and writing in English is based on records in agency files, and there is evidence from some agency records show that she 'reads, speaks and understands English'<sup>48</sup>, 'speaks and communicates in English well'<sup>49</sup>, and was able to write/ communicate with housing services via email in English, which demonstrate it was considered. Many witnesses also explain that she communicated well in English. In accessing services, had she chosen to do so, the panel recognised that language would not necessarily have been an issue for her.

11.23 Jonas spoke broken English, preferring to speak at home in Lithuanian in front of the children. GP records show that he had 'poor English'. Teachers reported 'challenges' with his communication in English<sup>50</sup>. There is a recognition that language barriers can cause frustration and challenge in everyday communication. This is considered relevant in understanding how Jonas could have accessed services if he needed to or had been communicating with his children who were speaking predominantly in English. The description of his 'presentation' as a bit of a loner, and his reserved persona, or distance with people could have been linked to his confidence about his ability to communicate in English.

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<sup>46</sup> Explored in section 13 and 14.

<sup>47</sup> Section 6.7.3

<sup>48</sup> Maternity records

<sup>49</sup> School records,

<sup>50</sup> Explored in section 13

11.24 Jonas's ability to communicate effectively in English potentially created a pressure for Janina to continue with certain tasks (communicating and liaising with housing and other services, school liaison or paying bills). The panel considered whether his reluctance to speak English may have been a way of keeping Janina doing those tasks and keeping control of her. The panel debated why Jonas let Janina take care of everything and noted this may not be about power or control and could be about who is best at what and they were dividing the tasks up. As there was no clear evidence that this was a controlling behavior, the panel noted that it may have been, but could not say with any certainty that it was.

### **Religion/ Beliefs**

11.25 The couples' religious beliefs are unknown, and the panel were unable to obtain this information from family members but are not believed to have had a bearing on the events being reviewed.

11.26 There is no state religion in Lithuania. However, the biggest faith group is Roman Catholicism. According to the population census in 2011, about 77% those who deemed themselves religious were Catholics. The panel was unable to establish if religious beliefs impacted on the conflict Janina and Jonas apparently experienced over the prospect of a divorce.

11.27 Enquiries were made with witnesses. Frank described Janina as 'spiritual' but not religious. They are understood to have had a non- religious cremation service.

### **Sexual orientation**

11.28 The sexual orientation for each is believed to have been heterosexual.

### **Intersectionality**

11.29 Intersectionality was discussed at length during the panel. In simple terms, intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on any of the protected characteristics, and/or class and other forms of discrimination "intersect" to create unique dynamics and effects of disadvantage.

11.30 The protected characteristics of gender, age and ethnicity were considered to establish any disadvantage that Janina may have experienced. Language has been explored and Janina was understood to communicate well in English, although Jonas had more difficulties. Records do not indicate any other known vulnerabilities revealed to agencies. However, in consideration of the developing academic research<sup>51</sup>, there are specific vulnerabilities (language, culture, access to services) which may have impacted Janina and/or Jonas's ability to seek support.

## **12. Dissemination**

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<sup>51</sup> Referenced at section 6

- Safer Lincolnshire Partnership.
- All agencies contributing to the review.
- Lincolnshire Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Domestic Abuse Commissioner.

### **13. Background, Overview and Chronology**

13.1 This following part of the report combines elements of the background, overview and chronology sections of the Home Office DARDR Guidance overview report template. This was done to avoid duplication of information. The narrative is told chronologically to give background history of Janina and Jonas prior to the timescales under review stated in the terms of reference to give context to their story. It is built on the lives of Janina, Jonas and their children. It is punctuated by subheadings to aid understanding.

13.2 The information is drawn from documents provided by agencies and from the police investigation following Janina's murder and Jonas's suicide. The information in this section is factual. Where there are 'unremarkable or routine' medical entries for the children, they are summarised. The analysis appears at section 14 of the report.

#### **13.3 Relevant information prior to the review period**

##### **Janina**

13.3.1 Janina was from a white Lithuanian family and was born in 1988. Janina was 33 years old at the time of her death. She had one sibling and had lived with her mother and stepfather in a town in Lithuania until she met and lived with Jonas aged 18 and later married him in 2010.

13.3.2 Janina moved to the UK in 2012. She was not in full time employment but did work part-time in a care home, whilst balancing childcare. This meant she was a key worker during COVID lockdown. At the time of her death, Janina lived with her husband and three children in a small town in Lincolnshire.

##### **Jonas**

13.3.3 Jonas was also from a white Lithuanian family and was born in 1982. He lived in a small town in Lithuania before coming to the UK. He had one brother. He met Janina when he was 23 years old. He was 40 years old at the time of the offence, having had his birthday in the hours before the murder. He was in full-time employment, working for a food manufacturer in Lincolnshire. He was also a key worker during COVID lockdown.

13.3.4 Janina and Jonas had moved to the UK in 2012, with their eldest child, seeking work. Despite the fact that Jonas's mother lived nearby, they initially joined friends in a town in Lincolnshire who were already in the area, living with them until they found independent accommodation.

13.3.5 They moved into a multi-occupancy rented flat in November 2012. They were visited by a Health Visitor who noted the flat was warm, it was clean and well maintained. Jonas was noted to have employment (an agency role) and was able to support the family.

#### **13.4 Relevant information during the review**

13.4.1 Between November 2012 and October 2013, there were a number of non-remarkable and routine medical appointments with the eldest child. No concerns were raised about domestic abuse.

13.4.2 In October 2013, they moved to a new rented house, and there are a number of routine medical appointments for the child. No concerns were raised about domestic abuse.

13.4.3 In October 2014, Janina became pregnant and shortly after commenced ante-natal care in December 2014. At her ULHT appointment in December 2014, and at her follow up appointments, it was noted that whilst her main language was Lithuanian, she could speak, read, and understand English. Routine enquiry<sup>52</sup> was undertaken, and Janina denied any abuse in her relationship. She also denied any historic or ongoing mental ill-health. Throughout further appointments (14.01.2015), routine enquiry continued eliciting a negative (no abuse) response.

13.4.4 On 30.03.2015, Jonas presented at the GP with headaches which he disclosed he had 5/6 times per month, and that he had suffered from them for months. He was initially treated with medication and advised to book a routine GP appointment. At his follow up GP appointment, he revealed he worked 12-hour shifts in a factory and described that he was always tired. He was diagnosed with tension-type headaches. He missed three phlebotomy (blood) appointments, before seeing his GP on 31.03.2015 to discuss the headaches. He was then diagnosed with Migraine with aura.

13.4.5 After attending his blood appointment, Jonas was seen on 22.04.2015 again by a GP and prescribed medication to trial for a month for the migraines. The doctor noted that Jonas had 'poor English with his main language being Lithuanian.' He also noted 'anxiety with wife pregnant.'

13.4.6 On 06.05.2015, Janina had some ante-natal appointments to discuss an elective Caesarean section, and routine enquiry was undertaken. Janina denied any abuse. She continued to engage with further appointments.

13.4.7 During a home visit for antenatal contact on 08.05.2015, the Health Visitor (children's health team) was unable to ask routine enquiry as the eldest child was present, but they established that Jonas was in employment and Janina had a good support network around her. Whooley questions<sup>53</sup> were asked and the Health Visitor had no concerns.

13.4.8 At a routine ante-natal appointment on 24.06.2015 with the Consultant, routine enquiry was not explored as Jonas was present.

13.4.9 Janina was admitted for planned elective Caesarean and gave birth on 08.07.2015. Jonas was present and no concerns were noted during her hospital stay, and up to and including her discharge on 14.07.2015.

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<sup>52</sup> Routine Enquiry is a term used to describe all service users about their experience of Domestic Abuse or sexual violence.

<sup>53</sup> Whooley questions are used as a screening tool to assess maternal mental health.

13.4.10 On 17.07.2015, the Transitional Care team's standard visit took place and whilst it is not described as 'routine enquiry', the risk assessment records describe that there were no information or concerns in relation to parental violence or aggression. No concerns were identified concerning Janina and Jonas's interactions. However, in 2015, the time at which Janina accessed maternity services, routine enquiry was not an expectation post-natally. Janina was discharged from the Community Midwife care to the Health Visitor the following day.

13.4.11 On 21.07.2015, the Health Visitor conducted the primary birth home visit. Janina disclosed that she was well, that Jonas was working, and they did not disclose financial concerns. Routine enquiry does not appear to have been asked. Processes have now changed and there is an expectation that it would be done and recorded.

13.4.12 On 04.08.2015 and 19.08.2015, Janina was seen for the developmental review by a Health Visitor at home. There are no records of routine enquiry being explored for the first meeting. For the second meeting, Janina reported being tired but well. Whooley questions were asked but there are no records of domestic abuse routine enquiry.

13.4.13 On 26.08.2015, Janina saw her GP for a face-to-face post-natal check-up. The records noted that she appeared to be well in self, mood is good, tired, feels well supported by family and friends. The children were noted to be at home with Jonas. No disclosures of concern were made.

13.4.14 Between 10.09.2015- 09.10.2015, the children were taken by Janina for three faces to face medical appointments for immunisations and a cough.

13.4.15 On 13.10.2015, during a Health Visitor home visit, no concerns were identified. Jonas was present in the kitchen making brunch. The Health Visitor has documented they were unable to discuss the parental relationship and no routine enquiry was undertaken, as Jonas was in the room, and this was against HV guidance at that time.

13.4.16 Between 16.10.2015 to 06.05.2016, there were a number of unremarkable visits where the children were taken by Janina to the GP surgery.

13.4.17 On 23.05.2016, Janina was seen at home during a Childrens Health 8–12-month developmental review. Whooley questions were asked, and no concerns identified. Janina was discharged from children's health care as per policy. Domestic abuse questions do not appear to have been asked, but no concerns reported by Janina. Some further routine medical contact took place for the children (immunisation and vaccinations) in the July and November 2016.

13.4.18 The family signed a new tenancy on 06.02.2017, and they moved into a family house on 04.03.2017. On 03.03.2017, their eligibility to receive housing benefit ended, but they submitted a claim for the new property on 10.03.2017.

13.4.19 After the Direct Debit for rent was cancelled on 21.09.2017, housing noted that there was a balance of £257.49 outstanding on the account. Janina agreed to settle the

outstanding amount on 09.10.2017, and then proposed that she would pay weekly. Whilst this could not be described as a significant amount, it suggested some minor money issues.

13.4.20 On 26.01.2018, Janina visited the GP surgery and met with a nurse to discuss weight gain that she reported for the previous 2 years, despite her healthy eating. Blood tests were conducted on 16.02.2018, with an entry to indicate a doctor review. There is no further entry to show what happened (and the next entry in respect of Janina is 01.02.2019). This doctor review does not appear to have been followed up by either the GP surgery or Janina.

13.4.21 There were three medical issues relating to the children. One child was taken to A&E with an injured arm in June 2018. The child was discharged with advice. No concerns were noted. One child had bumped their head on a trampoline in June 2018, causing nausea and a headache. They were discharged with advice. On 05.08.2018, one child (through Janina) had reported sunstroke to NHS 111. There is no outcome shown for this incident.

13.4.22 On 12.10.2018, Housing had cause to send a letter to Janina and Jonas regarding poor garden condition. This letter was followed up with a rent arrears letter on 22.10.2018.

13.4.23 On 13.11.2018, Jonas attended the GP surgery complaining of pain in the right side of his back and into his groin area. Revealing he had a manual job carrying heavy buckets, he also said that he was taking painkillers regularly, and he felt unable to do his job. He additionally reported headaches with 2–3-week history and he was concerned at length of time they had been going on. The nurse queried whether it was a trapped nerve and suggested a physio appointment and analgesia. Jonas signed off work sick.

13.4.24 Jonas attended a physio appointment on 21.11.2018, where he presented with pain in right groin/lower back during work. Clinical impression noted as right iliopsoas strain and mechanical back pain. He was given a home exercise programme. This appointment was followed up with a face-to-face GP appointment the following day, and Xray on 26.11.2018, and a number of follow up GP and physio appointments, where he was diagnosed with Osteoarthritis of the hip. He continued to receive treatment until he was discharged on 14.12.2018. It is unknown when he returned to work on adjusted duties.

13.4.25 On 24.02.2019, Janina had a face-to-face medical appointment, triaged from an NHS 111 call. Janina presented with high BP, feeling unwell and with a headache at back of head. It was noted to have started when doing gym work, lifting weights. She was diagnosed with headaches, reassured, advised to take analgesic, and rest.

13.4.26 On 21.03.2019, housing did a visit to the house to discuss house rent arrears. On 08.04.2019 and 16.06.2019, housing sent two sets of rent arrears letters.

13.4.27 On 03.06.2019, Jonas attended the GP surgery and asked for a home visit for Janina. She was seen at home on a home visit as she was unable to attend the surgery. She was diagnosed with tonsillitis and given appropriate medication.

13.4.28 On 19.06.2019, Janina has contact via email with housing, to explain that they would be late with their rent payment and stated they were 'struggling with money at the

moment.' She made an offer to pay £100 initially and the remainder the following week. A weekly plan was the put in place.

13.4.29 On 14.09.2019, one child was seen at A&E following an accidental fall at home. The child was reviewed by two professionals, who supported this finding of accidental injury.

13.4.30 On 17.10.2019, housing sent a further letter (1) regarding rent appears.

13.4.31 On 14.11.2019, the primary school which the eldest child attended, reported that the child had been upset and described an incident at home. Jonas had 'told (the child) off' as they had gone onto YouTube against his instructions. Jonas told the child they would not have a birthday as a result. The child did not want it to be mentioned to Jonas. The school spoke to Jonas, who disclosed that he had asked the child several times not to and the child went on YouTube anyway without permission.

13.4.32 On 21.11.2019, housing sent a further letter (2) regarding rent appears and followed it up with email contact offering a payment plan for the arrears.

13.4.33 Janina attended the GP surgery on 27.02.2020 with non-urgent medical symptoms which were appropriately treated with medication.

13.4.34 During March 2020, the UK began to experience the COVID<sup>54</sup> measures with initial advice about non-essential contact. On 23.03.2020, the Prime Minister advised, that people 'must' stay at home, and said that "we will immediately" close some businesses. This was the start of lockdown across the UK (see Annex 2). It is unknown how this impacted Janina and Jonas at this stage. It is known that schools and gyms were closed from this time.

13.4.35 A period of unsettled rent payments was seen during this initial lockdown period. Rent arrears letters were sent by housing on 09.03.2020, 27.05.2020 and 26.06.2020. Housing staff spoke with Janina by phone on 09.07.2020, and Janina confirmed that she would be paying the outstanding amounts (£600 split over 2 payments) in the following two weeks. She revealed that she would be going back to work. Two further rent arrears letters (3) were sent on 29.07.2020 and again on 20.11.2020. Janina emailed housing on 02.12.2020, to indicate they would pay £200 of arrears and settle the full outstanding amount by the 10.12.2020.

13.4.36 There were three occasions over the first week in December 2020 when one child wet themselves at school, and was also in the opinion of staff, going to the toilet a lot during the day. On 04.12.2020, the eldest child revealed to staff that their 'life was boring as they never did anything', and 'their parents wouldn't let them (go) out in cold in case they got sick<sup>55</sup>. They said they could not get sick as then parents (Janina and Jonas) would not be able to work. On 26.01.2021, the school reported that the eldest child had not had breakfast as they were getting the children ready for school.

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<sup>54</sup> Legally, the main COVID restrictions in England began at 1pm on 26 March, when The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force.

<sup>55</sup> The child had an earlier history of ear and chest infections.



13.4.37 On 09.02.2021, the school recorded that the eldest child was drawing a graphic picture of somebody on fire. Another child said you would burn if that happened. The child is reported to have said, 'I want to'. A decision was made for the class Teacher to monitor and check in with the child. Another classmate also disclosed that day that the child had told her that she had had, 'the worst morning ever'. When asked 'why?', the child said, 'it was a family thing, but my dad said I wasn't allowed to tell'. The student reminded the child that they should tell adults in school if they needed to. The child said 'no'. Another pupil then joined the conversation and asked, 'did you have a nightmare?' The child said it was 'worse' than a nightmare.

13.4.38 Following on from that incident of 09.02.2021 and connected to it, on 10.02.2021, the child spoke with the Teacher and was given some playthings to take home (slime-putty etc). The child said that they were playing with the playthings and their phone when Jonas asked where they were from. The child said, 'I won it.' The child revealed to the Teacher that they had told Janina that they had spoken with a Teacher, and 'the child wasn't meant to tell dad, but they did.' The child said the parents (Janina and Jonas) had argued. The child revealed to the Teacher, 'Mum was scared<sup>56</sup> to leave us with dad, so we went to Spar with her to get gas.' The child revealed they had tried to hug Jonas on their return home, but he was quiet with them. The child decided not to get any more toys from the Teacher 'to avoid dad getting annoyed'.

13.4.39 On 12.02.2021, the school held a 'Voice of the Child' session where the eldest child revealed, dad (Jonas) got angry and slammed the door which broke and he tried to fix it, dad hits the children when they are naughty, and Mum (Janina) tries to protect them. In the session with the other children, they revealed they spoke English and Jonas spoke Lithuanian. They stated that Jonas shouted at them, they were scared of him, and he had lots of rules.

13.4.40 As a result of these disclosures, staff spoke with Janina. She said that she was struggling with all of the children's' behaviour at home and she was trying different strategies. The staff shared with her that all the children had talked about dad shouting at them and that they are scared of him. Janina revealed that Jonas was feeling frustrated that the children are not listening to him. They discussed different strategies (not shouting, the use of different behaviour strategies, not to leave them standing at the wall, but to use the step, or chair, remove time from electronics and take time off bedtime, give the eldest a different bedtime.) The school had no immediate worries about the family and praised Janina for trying to find the solution. They assessed that due to the lockdown, the normally very active family were frustrated, but Janina was desperate to create better relationships with the children. Later that day, the eldest child discussed their concerns with Teachers and said they were 'scared to go home' in case Jonas shouted at them but was reassured that Janina had been informed.

13.4.41 On 09.03.2021, housing sent an email pursuing outstanding arrears and followed it up with a letter. Janina phoned and tried to set up a direct debit.

13.4.42 On 07.06.2021, the school reported that one child went into class with a large bruise across their tummy. The child was swinging on their curtains and fell and hit the table

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<sup>56</sup> There was no further disclosure to indicate what Janina may have been scared of- this is the child's opinion.

which they then broke as they landed. The following day, the other twin was noted going to the toilet multiple times (5/6) and complaining of pain. This was reported to Janina.

13.4.43 On 18.06.2021, the school recorded that the eldest child made regular toilet trips, with small spaces of time in between and urgent each time (not painful). The child also complained of people being too noisy which impacted their concentration. Teachers noted it was no louder than normal, and the child was acting unusually by telling tales about trivial matters about other children. Teachers spoke with Janina who revealed the child had toileting problems when they were stressed about something and that they were 'grumpy' at home.

13.4.44 On 19.07.2021, Revenues and Benefits reported unpaid council tax and arrears, which the couple (Janina and Jonas) had emailed to confirm they would pay by Direct Debit. This account was never set up.

13.4.45 On 05.10.2021, Janina presented at the GP surgery with a painful neck, shoulder and arm which was noted to have been injured during boxing training. Examined, noted impression of neck pain, acute with associated stiffness and brachialgia. Treatment was given.

13.4.46 On 08.10.2021, the eldest child asked to speak to a Teacher and discussed their concerns about toilet problems, which they linked to previous issues in year 4.

13.4.47 On 22.12.2021, one of the children presented at school in an upset state, saying they wanted to play with their dad, and they never get to play with their dad anymore. When probed about playing after school, the child said that dad (Jonas) 'says that he is an adult and can't play kids games.' The child also said that they could not play with their siblings because 'they hate the child.' The child was reported to look very tired and dejected. On the same day, one child was noted by the school, to be, 'over emotional this morning and very sensitive and keeps crying over the smallest of things.'

13.4.48 On 30.12.2021, the school recorded an incident where the eldest child spoke with a Teacher and revealed they were struggling to control their anger, tended to talk back or shout and sometimes uses violence, but not at school. Different coping techniques were discussed but they said they don't work to calm them. They disclosed their siblings 'wound them up', told lies at home, causing mum (Janina) to be unsure who to believe. They recounted an incident where they heard the other children arguing and a suspicion of a knife being taken out of the knife block by one of the 2, causing the other to scream. It was not used to hurt anyone. No one else witnessed what happened but one of the children was grounded. This was not investigated further.

13.4.49 On 17.01.2022, housing sent a rent arrears letter (2).

13.4.50 On 01.02.2022, Janina called and offered to make three payments (in excess of £500) spread over three dates to Revenue and Benefits. All payments were received by 25.04.2022.

13.4.51 Between February 2022- April 2022, there were no relevant agency contacts. Frank makes a reference<sup>57</sup> to a discussion he had with Janina in the month before the incident where she expressed her unhappiness at home. The date cannot be confirmed.

### 13.5 Incident on 01.05.2022

13.5.1 At the time of the incident the children all attended a local primary school. There were no other occupants of their house.

13.5.2 It was Jonas's birthday on 30.04.2022. Despite the fact that he rarely socialised<sup>58</sup>, arrangements were made for a night out with friends (Ona, Petras, Aras). These were people known to Janina and Jonas through their gym. Jonas was celebrating his birthday, so after drinks and food at their house, they all went by taxi to a nightclub. Petras and Aras<sup>59</sup> describe that 'a lot of alcohol was drunk.' The actual amount was never specified but, in his statements, Aras disclosed that the whole group was drinking whiskey all evening. They had drunk a bottle of 50% proof whisky before going out and continued to drink double whiskey and cokes.

13.5.3 It is stated by those witnesses<sup>60</sup> that Janina had been dancing with one of the group, Petras, and this caused a verbal disagreement in the group, with Jonas becoming angry and was shouting. When they all departed in a taxi, Jonas appeared to still be angry and continued shouting at Janina. Ona and Petras dropped them off at their home in the taxi at about 01.30hrs, collecting their own children who had been babysitting. Aras initially went into the house and Jonas told him to leave, stating he needed to speak to Janina alone.

13.5.4 Bar one, there are no non-family witnesses to the events as they unfold, and no neighbours heard or saw anything significant. However, despite no witnesses hearing noise that could isolate the time, the forensic evidence speaks of the violence that ensued.

13.5.5 The only possible witness to events is the eldest child, who heard noises, and went downstairs to check the noise. Their initial statement was recorded<sup>61</sup> on police body-worn video, and later transcribed. In a subsequent police interview<sup>62</sup>, the child described that they heard a noise sometime between 06.00-07.00 on 01.05.2022. The eldest child saw what they described as a 'fat man lying on the sofa' (this is believed to have been the body of Janina). Jonas told the child to go back to bed.

13.5.6 Jonas then went upstairs and spoke to the child. He told them that their mother had 'got drunk and banged her face on the wall and injured herself.' He also said that everyone was a bit drunk and 'mum was a bit flirty.' Jonas gave the child his mobile phone, telling her not to come down, but to ring the family friend Laima, when they woke later.

13.5.7 It is clear that sometime between 01.30 and 06.00-07.00, Jonas has murdered Janina. Jonas then hanged himself. The time could not be isolated. It is important to note that

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<sup>57</sup> Source – Police interview.

<sup>58</sup> Source Laima's police statement

<sup>59</sup> Source Petras and Aras's police interviews

<sup>60</sup> Source Petras, Aras and Ona's police interviews

<sup>61</sup> Childs statement was transcribed and used as source material for this review.

<sup>62</sup> Childs taped interview was transcribed and used as source material for this review.

there were no witnesses to these events, and from police information, it is clear that none of the children in the house saw what happened.

13.5.8 When the child phoned Laima some hours later (at 15.46), she dropped the keys from the first-floor window as the front door was locked. Laima entered and found the bodies of Janina and Jonas. Laima called police, who attended, and the police investigation commenced. The police initially recorded the child's first account on body worn video and later conducted a taped interview with the child. There is no explanation for the delay in the call to Laima, and it is known that all three children were alone in the house with their parents' bodies during this time (07.00-15.46). This time delay is something that the panel are unable to clarify.

13.5.9 The police search revealed the house was tidy throughout and aside from the living room, where Janina and Jonas were found, there did not appear to be a disturbance in the rest of the house. There was a small blood mark found on the bathroom sink. This could not be attributed to the incident.

13.5.10 The Inquest has been previously detailed at section 10.

## 14. Analysis

14.1 Agencies were asked:

- **To examine patterns of abuse and coercive and controlling behaviours perpetrated by the perpetrator against the victim.**
- **To consider how women with additional needs (Language/Diversity) who are experiencing domestic abuse access information, services, and support.**
- **To examine the impact of COVID 19, in particular lockdowns, on both an individual's ability to access information and support and agency responses.**
- **To consider potential gaps in service provision, alongside potential barriers to accessing services.**

14.1.1 The analysis is presented thematically to answer the questions.

The Chair also considered the following which have been contained within the main body of the report:

- **Whether family, friends or colleagues were aware of any abusive behaviour from the alleged perpetrator to the victim, prior to the homicide, and whether this had been shared, by them, with professionals (described below in section 14).**
- **Whether there were any previous victims of Jonas (there were none).**
- **Whether there were safeguarding concerns in relation to the children (there were none).**

## 14.2 Patterns of abuse and coercive and controlling behaviour<sup>63</sup> by the perpetrator against the victim.

14.2.1 During the period under review, there were no incidents reported to any agency to show that Janina was being controlled and coerced, bullied, and assaulted by Jonas, but post event information from witnesses suggests a pattern of obsessive behaviour, and one allegation of assault.

14.2.2 Many victims of domestic abuse are never brought to the attention of services, simply because either they do not recognise their experiences as abuse or because those around them do not. The majority of dangerously abusive relationships do not feature physical violence until much later. They begin with a system of control that is insidious and can become so ingrained that it is impossible to escape. Research<sup>64</sup> indicates that this manipulation may be about controlling the clothes they wear, the people they see, the places they go. These behaviours which have been identified in research in many abusive relationships were not obviously present in Janina's relationship with Jonas, according to witnesses. However, there is a disclosure of manipulation, through threats of suicide, which is recognised by researchers<sup>65</sup> as a form of controlling behaviour.

14.2.3 Coercive control and behaviour are a strategic form of ongoing oppression, a continuing act, or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim, to instil fear and self-doubt. Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

14.2.4 Coercive control within intimate partner relationships has been acknowledged by professionals since Evan Stark's work nearly 20 years ago and since 2015, has been recognised in law. However, this form of restrictive control, often forcing a partner into changing behaviours and/or using the children and extended family within the 'control' has always been a dangerous part of abusive relationships.

14.2.5 Victims of coercive and controlling relationships are often expected to demonstrate their 'loyalty' to their partner and this may result in isolation from family and friends. For many women, this means hiding a lot of the behaviours from their family, in order to try not to create rift. It is relevant to note that Janina's immediate family were in Lithuania. Jonas's mother from whom he was estranged, lived locally but was not active in their lives. Jonas is reported to have a negative relationship with his mother as a result of adverse childhood experiences<sup>66</sup>. He would not allow any other friends, except Laima in their home.

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<sup>63</sup> Coercive control is defined as: 'Any incident or pattern of incidents **of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse** between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional.

<sup>64</sup> Stark, Evan (2007), Oxford University Press: '**Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women In Personal Life.**'

<sup>65</sup> Evan Stark, Jane Monkton-Smith

<sup>66</sup> Sourced from Laima's police statement.

14.2.6 For other victims of coercive and controlling behaviour, it is minimising the abuse, so those closest to them are not concerned. It is sadly true, that in some families, there is an acceptance of the abuse as a form of “male dominance” that they feel is their right. This might be due to cultural, religious, or historical factors, but in many cases, there has been an acceptance of a level of control and of women being subservient to their male partner within families for generations.

14.2.7 The reality of this situation is that the friends and family are not colluding with the abusive partner, but rather, they are unaware or do not recognise the behaviours. They potentially won't challenge the abuse (in this case threats of suicide and threats to kill Janina), as they could believe that it may result in punishment of the victim and further alienation from their loved ones.

14.2.8 The statements from friends (taken after the murder) about a declining state of the marriage provide information which suggest there are relevant issues for consideration to the murder. This should be considered in light of the suicide threats and the disclosure made by Aras regarding a previous (uncorroborated) assault on Janina. There is no reason to suggest that Aras's recollection is wrong or that Janina's account is untrue, but it cannot be verified by the panel. They were also told/implied by Janina that she did not believe his threats and did not voice fear or appear frightened of him.

14.2.9 Janina was known to want to keep the family unit together until the children were a bit older and when she could independently financially support them and had described to Laima that she didn't want her children to be impacted. This meant she remained in the relationship much longer than she wanted. She was also looking for a second job to help with her financial independence.

14.2.10 Some abusers also use the children to further the control, either belittling the mother continuously in front of the children and encouraging them to join in, or even threatening to hurt the children unless the victim complies with his demands. The eldest child revealed that on at least one occasion that Janina was too concerned to leave them with Jonas. This is, however, the observations of a young child and we cannot state with any certainty, what was in Janina's mind. There is evidence provided by school records that Jonas often shouted at the children, was angry and frustrated that he saw little respect and the children reported this behaviour at school. This may have been aggravated by his struggles with language. Families are often so caught up in the abusive cycle, that it can feel impossible to escape and sometimes easier to comply.

14.2.11 Cost of living challenges could manifest in the presentation or symptoms of general stress that we see in lots of families. Janina and Jonas were a young family, with the financial challenges that many young families face. The panel explored whether Janina experienced financial abuse but found no evidence to support this hypothesis. Both Janina and Jonas worked long hours to support the family. There is a pattern of late payments and rent arrears which could explain their joint frustrations. They had experienced lockdown and some home schooling with three children at home during the first lockdown period. As key workers, they returned to work quickly and the children attended school. Whilst the school reports identified some incidents, they were considered not be so significant as to warrant agency intervention.

14.2.12 Some controlling and coercive behaviours are often present in the lead up to domestic homicide. There are a number of indicators that are recognised by professionals as indicators of coercive control, and some were identified following this review in the case of Janina and Jonas. The behaviours are described by the witnesses at different times. These include:

### 14.3 Humiliation and Self Doubt (psychological):

14.3.1 Janina had felt concerned and uncomfortable by her weight gain<sup>67</sup>. It is not known if Jonas highlighted this to her. However, when she sought to address that, and actually lost weight and gained confidence, Jonas was jealous and clingy, and Laima reported that he was unhappy with her new-found confidence.

14.3.2 On the night of the murder, witnesses (who had attended the club and were in the taxi) describe Jonas's controlling behaviour, shouting at Janina, and attempting to open the taxi door, whilst the vehicle was still moving.

### 14.4 Assaults (physical):

14.4.1 There is no agency evidence that Janina had suffered any physical assault from Jonas prior to the murder. That does not mean there was none. Police records in the UK and Lithuania were searched and no information was found.

14.4.2 Her best friend Laima stated that Jonas had **not** assaulted her, and Janina did not fear him. This is contradicted by Aras who recounts that Janina had disclosed to him that Jonas had once 'beaten her up'. Whilst this is not substantiated by any other source, this information was provided at inquest to the Coroner and was not challenged.

14.4.3 School reports indicate that the children revealed that there had been arguing at home, but the reports contained no evidence of anything of a physical nature towards Janina. Janina did not present with any visible injuries. It is possible that Janina was not the victim of any physical abuse, and the school were not aware of any DA taking place. The school had not been made aware of any DA concerns about Janina and had not observed any marks or bruises on her.

14.4.4 During 'Voice of the Child' sessions in school, there were comments made by one child, that dad (Jonas) would 'hit' the other children if they were naughty. This was due to their behaviour and was not reported as a regular occurrence. The children did not present with any visible marks. The law states, 'As a parent, you don't have the legal right to smack your child unless it is 'reasonable punishment'. If the violence you use is severe enough to leave a mark, for example a scratch or a bruise, you can be prosecuted for assault, or the child can be taken into local authority care. In their session, the other children did not mention any 'hitting' but said that dad would 'shout'. Whilst not condoning violence, there is nothing so significant noted that the school felt they should make a referral or intervene. No marks or

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<sup>67</sup> Janina had gone to her GP in 2020 to discuss her concerns about her weight gain. This was also reported in Laima's statement where she described Janina as 'uncomfortable' by her weight gain.

bruises were noticed on the children, and no other disclosures were made. The comment about 'hitting' was addressed with Janina, and she was asked about their homelife. She said that Jonas found the children's behaviour challenging, and he struggled with their behaviour, but she did not disclose that he had hit them. The school gave Janina better strategies for managing the children's behaviour, to share with Jonas.

14.4.5 The Head Teacher confirmed the School has a lot of training within a range of safeguarding issues and holds regular training and updates for all staff with regards to Domestic Abuse/ Violence. This is provided by the DSL<sup>68</sup>. School staff are trained to ask open questions so therefore if DA is not disclosed or suspected, the school would not directly ask the children. The school received no notifications regarding Operation Encompass<sup>69</sup>. As there was no suspected DA taking place, the school addressed the comment directly with Janina and thereafter checked in regularly, with no disclosures made to them.

#### **14.5 Isolating from support system:**

14.5.1 Janina did not have the same familial support network that she would have done in Lithuania, so the isolation was created by the situation they found themselves in. COVID lockdown also played a part in isolating many families across the UK.

14.5.2 Janina had a circle of (female) friends and had planned to go on holiday with them. Jonas was described as jealous about this by witnesses, and witnesses reported that Jonas was also jealous and resentful of her going to the gym.

14.5.3 According to one friend, Laima, Jonas refused to allow visitors to their home. Jonas tried to prevent her from being with those friends, in an attempt to isolate Janina and keep her dependant on him. Laima believed this was about control, and not simply lack of confidence with language. They had many Lithuanian friends and associates, but Jonas wanted them to be on their own. She had made these disclosures to witnesses.<sup>70</sup>

#### **14.6 Financial control and economic abuse:**

14.6.1 Economic abuse was considered in this case. The panel considered that there are subtle but potential signs of economic control. Janina disclosed to Aras (para 6.4.19) that she wanted a divorce from Jonas, claiming that she had to 'buy all of the food and Jonas didn't really do anything and couldn't look after himself'. Other witnesses disclosed that this area was one of concern for Janina as she felt that she could not leave Jonas as she managed everything<sup>71</sup> (house, bills, shopping, rent etc) and she was trying to prepare Jonas to manage these things himself. This may suggest that Jonas made Janina feel he was totally dependent on her, and this could be perceived to be a method of control.

14.6.2 There is evidence of Jonas working long hours to support his family. Unusually, considering cultural norms where males are presented as more dominant in Lithuanian

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<sup>68</sup> Designated Safeguarding Lead within school.

<sup>69</sup> Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate so children experiencing domestic abuse.

<sup>70</sup> Source- statements from Laima and Greg.

<sup>71</sup> Source Laima's police statement



culture<sup>72</sup>, it was Janina who, by mutual agreement appeared to manage the finances within the relationship. The housing team report that when they contacted Jonas about rent arrears, he said he 'would take details and pass to his partner.' Janina set up the direct debits and appeared to manage the money. The prevalent research suggests the perpetrator can manipulate through financial control. Janina appears to have been responsible for the bills and paying the rent, but there was no clear information either way about who had overall budgetary control. Whilst this may have been an indicator of economic abuse, the panel considered that this may have been a division of chores, particularly due to Jonas' language barrier Jonas's language challenges may have been the reason.

14.6.3 The housing team confirmed that during the course of the tenancy there had been low level isolated issues associated with rent arrears. No enforcement action or proceedings were ever required or initiated and the contacts that took place were only to address and discuss to prevent any potential escalation and ensure any support needed provided. The highest level of arrears during the tenancy was £493.73 in July 2020<sup>73</sup> and this was not considered to be a serious concern by Housing as their rent account was always generally conducted satisfactorily. This may have been an issue for Janina and Jonas. There were no concerns or action taken by Housing and following this the matter resolved and no further letters were sent regarding rent arrears and the only other contact from them was requests for a direct debit mandate in March 2021, this being the last contact regarding the tenancy.

## 14.7 Timeline to Domestic Homicide research

14.7.1 A renowned expert in the field of Domestic Homicide, Professor Jane Monkton-Smith's research identifies the 8\* step timeline to Domestic Abuse Homicides<sup>74</sup>, which include many of the potential coercive or controlling behaviours displayed by Jonas in this case.

14.7.2 **Stage 1: A pre-relationship history of stalking or abuse by the perpetrator:** Typically, this features at the first stage. In this case, the pre-relationship history is unknown as family members did not share this information. There is no recorded agency information about previous stalking or abuse. It is not known about any of his previous relationships. Only one statement about a physical assault was given by Aras.

14.7.3 **Stage 2: The romance develops quickly into a serious relationship:** Janina and Jonas met online and quickly formed a relationship, when she was 16 and he was 7 years older. At the outset of the relationship, the potential for power imbalance exists as her relative immaturity would mean she would have almost certainly have been influenced by Jonas at the outset of the relationship. They married within 2 years and whilst this is not deemed to be a rapid relationship, it became serious and led to marriage at an early stage.

14.7.4 **Stage 3: The relationship becomes dominated by coercive control:**

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<sup>72</sup> Source – Independent witness interview under S6.7

<sup>73</sup> This was the 1<sup>st</sup> period of lockdown, and it is unclear how long they remained out of work as they were essential workers. The reason for the non-payment has not been established during this review.

<sup>74</sup> 'Control: Dangerous Relationships and how they end in Murder', Jane Monkton Smith published 2022.

Witnesses and friends describe a range of concerning behaviours which include telling of his jealousy at Janina's newfound confidence in attending the gym, her posting of images on Instagram, his clingy behaviour and his shouting at her in front of people.

14.7.5 Laima described that he would not allow friends to visit their home.

14.7.6 Janina was also expected to be the one who managed contact with services (housing, school, doctors).

14.7.7 Jonas also repeatedly threatened to kill himself and had once claimed that he would kill her if she left him, a concerning and emotionally blackmailing behaviour, which is used to control people, and manipulate them to stay in a relationship.

14.7.8 **Stage 4: A trigger threatens the perpetrator's control - for example, the relationship ends, or the perpetrator gets into financial difficulty:**

14.7.9 There were several incidents in the lead up to this tragic murder which could be deemed to be triggers. Despite the fact that they had never separated, Janina was adamant that she intended to divorce him. Janina had made it clear that she had fallen out of love with him, and she had specifically told him that she was not in love with him anymore<sup>75</sup>. She had told multiple people of her plans, including her mother-in-law<sup>76</sup> when she discussed the potential for their separation.

14.7.10 Janina continued to go to the gym several times a week, had lost weight and was being complimented and getting attention which upset Jonas. She had built up a community of friends at the gym and was competing successfully in body-building competitions. She told Jonas that she was going to divorce him. This could have caused Jonas to feel a loss of control in the relationship.

14.7.11 Janina and Jonas had had several (low level but constant) financial challenges<sup>77</sup>. They had a payment plan set up for their rent when they had fallen repeatedly into (low- level) arrears. It is possible that financial worries and associated responsibilities played on his mind, and he may have considered what life would be like without Janina and the children.

14.7.12 The incident in the nightclub may have contributed to Jonas's feelings of lack of control as Janina appeared to be moving on with her own life. Although he did not personally see it, Jonas had been told she had kissed another man, and this led to an incident (described as arguing or shouting in the club and in the taxi).

14.7.13 Jonas was also aware that Janina had also planned to go away on a girls holiday a week after the murder, which is a potential trigger where Jonas knows the relationship is coming to an end, and he could not make Janina stay. This newfound freedom would have been a frustration for him. Janinas' dependence on him was decreasing.

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<sup>75</sup> Source- Laima's police interview

<sup>76</sup> Source Police Notification Form to LCC.

<sup>77</sup> Chronology demonstrates continuous arrears with rent and council tax.

**14.7.14 Stage 5: Escalation - an increase in the intensity or frequency of the partner's control tactics, such as stalking or threatening suicide:**

Whilst there is no 'stalking' information, Jonas's jealousy and clinginess were described by Laima<sup>78</sup>. On multiple occasions and to several different people, Janina disclosed that Jonas had threatened suicide<sup>79</sup> and on at least one occasion threatened to kill Janina<sup>80</sup> if she left him. Janina did not appear to be fearful of these threats and according to witnesses, did not believe them. His threats to commit suicide were referenced by several witnesses mentioned in this review.

**14.7.15 Stage 6: The perpetrator has a change in thinking - choosing to move on, either through revenge or by homicide:**

There is no specific evidence that Jonas had a change in thinking. However, on the night of the incident, Jonas suspected or believed that Janina had 'cuddled and kissed a man on the dance floor'. He became angry- shouting at her. It was the first time that witnesses had observed Jonas acting in this way with Janina.

14.7.16 Jonas was aware that she planned a holiday. Janina was starting to build a life without him in it. It is possible that Jonas may have started to recognise that she would not reconcile with him. We cannot be clear about his thought process when they entered the house.

**14.7.17 Stage 7: Planning - the perpetrator might buy weapons or seek opportunities to get the victim alone:**

There is no specific evidence that Jonas had sought weapons or planned to kill Janina on that night. There is also no evidence to support that this was either a planned or deliberate act, although it is clear from events described by witnesses that Jonas was losing control of their relationship. Jonas had been told that Janina wanted a divorce, her confidence was growing, and she planned a holiday without him. Jonas was understood to be under the influence of alcohol, according to witnesses which would undoubtedly have impacted his decision making, but it is not in any way offered as an excuse for his actions.

14.7.18 On the night of the murder, Jonas had the perfect environment to take control had he chosen to do so. They had returned home, there were no witnesses to intervene and help Janina. Although Janina was physically fit and strong, she was smaller than Jonas. Jonas was a physically strong man according to witnesses who saw him at the gym, and his stature and build showed him as a muscular bodybuilder in images held by the police. He had the ability to physically restrain Janina and he did not need a weapon. He was demonstrably angry travelling home in the taxi. He was aware that she planned to leave and according to witnesses, had previously told him so. He has asked Aras to leave so that he could be alone with Janina, and he was aware she would be going on holiday within days. As there was no clear evidence of planning, the panel agreed that the incident appeared to be spontaneous.

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<sup>78</sup> Source Laima interview

<sup>79</sup> Source Laima and Ona interviews

<sup>80</sup> Source Frank interview with author

#### 14.7.19 **Stage 8: Homicide - the perpetrator kills his or her partner and possibly hurts others such as the victim's children:**

Jonas kills Janina in the family home. He uses violent force against her and strangles her. He does not hurt the children physically but inflicts hurt by his last words and seeks to demonise their mother explicitly stating that their mother had got drunk and had 'flirted' with another man. In attempting to justify his actions, Jonas used language to suggest that he was a victim, and that Janina was responsible for what he did to her. This unimaginable hurt would have been aggravated by the three children being left in the property for a prolonged period whilst the bodies of both of their parents were also present. The police were unable to ascertain what, if anything the children may have seen during that time in the home, before Laima was called. In line with research by Jane Monkton-Smith, this was the final act of revenge against Janina, and the final attempt for Jonas to control the narrative and present himself as a victim.

#### 14.7.20 **Summary of Stages**

14.7.21 Divorce and separation are a fact that impacts thousands of families across the UK every day. Whilst many are by agreement, many others have degrees of conflict and escalating tensions caused by the pressures of separation. It is not commonly understood by lay-people or non-experts in the domestic abuse arena, that there is a period of heightened tension where victims of abusive relationships are extra vulnerable.

14.7.22 It is often assumed that a victim choosing to separate from an abusive partner or leave an abusive home will reduce the risk to them and their children of further harm. However, evidence from research and surveys of victims indicates that the risk of further violence and harm actually increases at the point at which a victim leaves a perpetrator. A study of 200 women's experiences of domestic abuse commissioned by Women's Aid (Humphreys & Thiara, 2002) found that 76% of separated women had experienced post-separation verbal and emotional abuse and violence, including: 41% subjected to serious threats towards themselves or their children; 23% subjected to physical violence; 6% subjected to sexual violence; and 36% stated that this violence was ongoing. For 60% of the women in the study, fears that they or their children would be killed by the perpetrator had motivated their decision to leave the abusive relationship.

14.7.23 What is unusual in this case, is that Janina did not perceive herself to be a victim and according to most witnesses, she had not been subject to physical abuse from Jonas. Numerous people were aware that Janina was preparing to divorce Jonas. It is entirely likely that she did not see the risk at the point of potential or impending separation. Many witnesses independently reported that Janina had told them of his threats to commit suicide. One witness (Greg) reported that Janina had also told him that Jonas said he would kill Janina if she left, but she appeared to dismiss this comment. This escalating behaviour by Jonas towards Janina was unreported and not disclosed to agencies until after the murder. No anonymous reports were made to police and no 3<sup>rd</sup> party reports were made by neighbours highlighting any issues. This suggests that none of the witnesses recognised the risks associated with suicidal threats or how they are recognised as signs of domestic abuse.

### 14.8 Agency information

14.8.1 For **Children's Health**, it is the expectation that practitioners will ask the domestic abuse questions at all contacts with patients if safe to do so and complete the template for health records document, that it has been asked. There were four occasions, on 08.05.2015 (reason - child present), on 21.07.2015 (no reason stated) and on 23.05.2016

(Health not required to do so) when the domestic abuse question was not asked. On 13.10.2015, the health visitor documented on health records that Jonas was in the kitchen making brunch, so she was unable to discuss the parental relationship. Whilst routine enquiry was missed on those occasions, the time gap between those engagements with the family were so separate from the incident under review, it is unlikely that there would have been any significant information that could have assisted with a risk assessment or intervention to assist Janina at the time of the murder.

14.8.2 From the **GP records**, there were no indications of coercive or controlling behaviours from the recorded entries reviewed.

14.8.3 From the **School – LCC Education** records, the three children attended the same school and have done so for all their education time so far in the UK. There were no signs of domestic abuse known at the time. The named school follows the Lincolnshire safeguarding policy and works alongside various agencies when required including referring into them. The school records show both parents as caring and supportive towards the children. Janina and Jonas were described as active parents and involved in the children's lives, taking turns to drop off and pick up and attended parents' evenings. There are some individual school records to suggest that the children felt occasionally stressed. The children appeared to the school to be confused by their parents arguing and all three talked about Jonas shouting at them. School spoke with the parents individually on occasions and with the children and there were no signs of domestic abuse taking place. School has an open-door policy and runs drop ins so there were opportunities for parents to attend. The school has many domestic violence posters up around the school signposting advice in different languages alongside a range of other literature. The school did not consider that any behaviour that they saw in relation to this family warranted agency intervention.

14.8.4 **ULHT** had no knowledge of domestic abuse, including coercive and controlling behaviour, in relation to Janina and Jonas' relationship. ULHT records suggest that when Jonas was present with Janina during either Midwifery appointments, the babies' delivery, their Transitional Care inpatient admission or any Homecare/Community Midwife home visits, no concerns arose in relation to their joint presentation or interactions.

14.8.5 It is acknowledged and accepted that there may be occasions on which it is neither safe nor appropriate to undertake routine enquiry, and documentation of the rationale for such a decision would be expected. Domestic Abuse routine enquiry was undertaken with Janina (with no disclosures or concerns) during all expected attendances, apart from that on 24.06.2016 when she was seen by a consultant. It was not required to be asked at that stage. It is also documented that Jonas was present, which would be an accepted rationale for not asking those questions in his presence.

14.8.6 ULHT introduced Maternity Medway (an electronic patient record), via a phased introduction commencing in April 2017, and so the recording of domestic abuse routine enquiry/disclosures has changed since its involvement with Janina; with the routine enquiry being prompted within various workflows on the Maternity system, at booking and at numerous intervals throughout the antenatal and postnatal periods. This facilitates a more frequent level of enquiry, whilst also recognising the impact of post-natal stressors on relationships.

## **14.9 How women with additional needs (Language/Diversity) who are experiencing domestic abuse access information, services, and support.**

14.9.1 Janina was described<sup>81</sup> generally as being able to communicate well in English. Whilst English was her second language, it is not believed to have limited her ability to communicate with work, or medical or education partners. She spoke in English to her friends at the gym. Information suggests that Janina was well integrated in the local area, had employment, sought appropriate medical care when needed and engaged appropriately with the school and education system.

14.9.2 Whilst there is now evidence of abusive behaviour (now recognised as coercive through suicidal threats), it appears that Janina was not personally aware of what extent this posed a risk to her. It appears that Janina had made no attempt to seek any professional support for domestic abuse or coercive behaviour. Whilst Janina discussed Jonas in terms of him threatening suicide, she did not intimate any threat or risk that she may face to friends or family. Witnesses also describe that she did not show fear, and in fact 'rolled her eyes' when talking about the threats. Apart from one alleged report from Aras, Janina did not disclose that she was subject to any physical assaults. Janina did not appear to have reported anything as she did not see herself as a victim. Janina did not realise these comments were indicative of his state of mind that could then translate into harm being perpetrated against her as he struggled to retain control of the relationship. Janina appeared not to recognise the risks of her position, and other witnesses also did not recognise her vulnerability.

14.9.3 It has been identified in other DARDRs that where children are involved, that women tend to stop reporting their home circumstances because they fear that their children will be removed and placed into care, and whilst there is no specific evidence of that here, discussion was relevant and debated by panel. Janina was preparing to leave and waiting until she would have financially able to support herself and the children. As a family, they had experienced typical family challenges and frustrations, including COVID, home schooling, three young energetic children, financial pressures, and general schooling responsibilities. Language and communication did not appear to be an issue for Janina or any of the children who attended an English-speaking school.

14.9.4 It appears from the agencies involved in this review, that no third-party disclosures were made to any agency. It is therefore impracticable to identify what could have changed in this case. Many agencies have systems and mechanisms and methods in place to report domestic abuse. None of the witnesses who Janina made disclosures to, reported concerns. Because Janina appeared not to recognise the risks of her position, and potentially linked to some of the cultural observations made in this report, other witnesses also did not recognise her vulnerability. The Public are not aware that threats of suicide in a relationship can be indicative of a state of mind in a person who may then take extreme action against a partner to retain them within the relationship or prevent them from leaving.

14.9.5 In considering the ease and availability of information which could have assisted Janina, a routine internet search on 'Divorce and domestic abuse in Lincolnshire,' took the author to multiple links where a plethora of advice for victims and 3<sup>rd</sup> party reporting could be found, with 24-hour hotlines and information on getting support. They included links to Local Support. EDAN-Lincs and the police provide translated copies of domestic abuse

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<sup>81</sup> Described by her employers and noted in her GP records as communicating well in English.

leaflets. National organisations exist<sup>82</sup> which provide support, advice and guidance for non-English nationals in the UK.

14.9.6 From the IMR information, I am satisfied that all available support information would have been provided by the many professionals with whom she could have had access to. There is significant evidence of policies and procedures to offer domestic abuse support frameworks and of appropriate guidance and support offered to the wider public.

14.9.7 Many of the support groups have available information signposted and displayed in GP surgeries, Hospitals, Shops, Pubs, and other public places. It is unknown if Janina ever listened to radio or TV advertising campaigns concerning domestic abuse or coercive behaviour. Despite recent academic research, there is however limited national public information or campaigns which highlight the increased risks posed by victims during and after separation.

#### 14.9.8 **Agency specific information**

14.9.9 For **LCC Children's Heath**, they identified that the family's ethnic group is white Lithuanian. Although an interpreter was not used during any of the contacts that were completed by the Health Visiting team, from review of the records it appears that they were satisfied that Janina was able to understand and speak English as full conversations were recorded. There is no record that any of the practitioners who saw the family asked whether they required an interpreter, which they would deem to be good practice. There is a template to record the use of interpreter on records, which is an aide memoire for practitioners to consider use of interpreter if English is not the first language of the patient. The use of interpreters for patients with English as a second language was part of the record keeping audit in 2022. An action plan was put in place to highlight the need to ensure that practitioner asked whether an interpreter was required. The action plan was shared with all practitioners.

14.9.10 From the **GP records**, the IMR notes that consultation processes were sensitive to patient identity. The linguistic identity was of relevance, as noted to be Lithuanian. There were no concerns expressed about Janina's communication ability. However, in Jonas's record he was noted to have 'poor English' within a consultation dated 22.04.2015, although this was not noted in other consultations and therefore does not appear to have been a barrier in communication. The practice procedure in incidents of a language barrier preventing communication is to offer translation services via telephone within the appointment, this does not appear to have been required to access services.

14.9.11 From the **School – LCC Education** records, Janina's language was considered good enough to converse with the school. The school have a variety of literature available in different languages. The school had conversations with parents and support was offered regarding children's behaviour.

14.9.12 The **ULHT** records refer specifically to the services Janina received between December 2014 and July 2015, and records show that Janina reported that her main language was Lithuanian; however, she could speak, read, and understand English. There was no

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<sup>82</sup> Eastern European Resource Centre, London, [ro-eehub.org.uk](http://ro-eehub.org.uk) – Free support and advice services for the Romanian and Eastern European communities in the UK

indication that staff were concerned about her ability to understand information shared during her consultations, or when direct routine enquiry was undertaken.

14.9.13 From the IMR information, the panel were satisfied that all available support information would have been provided by the many professionals with whom she could have had access to. There is significant evidence of policies and procedures to offer domestic abuse support frameworks and of appropriate guidance and support offered to the wider public.

#### 14.10 The impact of COVID 19<sup>83</sup>, in particular lockdowns, on both an individual's ability to access information and support and agency responses.

14.10.1 The COVID period including lockdown would have been relevant to Janina's interaction with agencies prior to her death, had she needed to make contact, and her association with friends and could have hidden the deterioration of her relationship with Jonas during lockdown. It is known that she was home-schooling the children during some of this time, before resuming work in the care home. Jonas and Janina were deemed to be key workers (she a Carer and he in food production) so returned to work quite quickly. Like many families, during lockdown, it is likely they would have encountered frustration and challenges of keeping three energetic children engaged and entertained, and disagreements would inevitably have caused challenges within the home.

14.10.2 ***'Lockdown means that people who were already controlling and abusing their partners are now even more controlling and volatile. The lockdown has not created abuse, it has just made it more visible and dangerous'*** - Professor Jane Monckton Smith<sup>84</sup>

14.10.3 Due to COVID rules, like most of the country, Janina would not have been able to readily mix in the community, with her many friends or at the gym where she felt confident. The panel was unable to ascertain whether there were any significant events that occurred between Jonas and Janina during the lockdown periods.

14.10.4 **LCC Children's Health** has identified no learning within this case regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the individual's ability to access information and support.

14.10.5 From the **GP practice**, the practice remained open and accessible during the COVID 19 pandemic period, including the lockdowns. In March 2020 they introduced 'askmyGP' as an additional online platform that allowed patients to request appointments, alongside the phone line. The practice introduced screening questions for COVID 19, in line with the guidance at the time, meaning that patients were triaged via phone before being invited in if the clinician deemed this to be clinically appropriate. Patients could attend the practice building for the minor injuries service and would be admitted following screening questions for COVID 19. By February 2021, they had reviewed the website, with the aim of making it more accessible to patients.

14.10.6 From the **School - LCC Education** records, it is noted that during the first lockdown the children did not attend school. They were also not deemed to be a family of concern so would have only received the weekly phone call. The school remained open for

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<sup>83</sup> Appendix 3

<sup>84</sup> Monckton Smith, J. (2020). Intimate Partner Femicide: Using Foucauldian Analysis to Track an Eight Stage Progression to Homicide. *Violence Against Women*, 26(11), 1267–1285.  
<https://core.ac.uk/download/210991723.pdf>



email contact should parents need to contact them. For the second and third lockdown the children attended school, as they were entitled to do as the parents were key workers and there were no concerns during this time with regards to domestic abuse.

14.10.7 The **ULHT** records that neither Janina or Jonas accessed ULHT services during the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore no associated concerns were identified. ULHT provides acute medical services and in the event that immediate medical issues had arisen, care would have still been available and provided, in accordance with the relevant COVID-related pathways and processes in place at that time.

14.10.8 At the time of the commissioning of this DARDR, the County's commissioned domestic abuse services were provided by EDAN Lincs – Ending Domestic Abuse Now in Lincolnshire, and were known in the community as EDAN Lincs. The service was re-commissioned in April 2023 and is now referred to as LDASS – Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Specialist Services which is still provided by EDAN Lincs. The service was operational throughout the lockdown period, so a victim of abuse or survivor would have been able to access the local Domestic Abuse Services during the COVID Pandemic. The period of this DARDR scoping period was during the period of total lockdown, through into partial lockdown with the resuming of normal day to day living.

14.10.9 EDAN Lincs maintained and remained operational in respect of Triage and Outreach for both service users and agencies to access agency for support, advice or sign posting to other services. The service at this time was operational between Monday – Friday 0900 hrs – 1700hrs. Service users could contact the service via telephone, email and an on-line chat via the area of business, which was then called, Triage. The change to the service, due to the COVID pandemic, was driven primarily by telephone, email, on-line chat, and text; in that face-to-face meetings/appointments did not go ahead, in line and driven by Govt. restrictions. The drop-in meetings and face to face “SAFE, **S**afety **A**wareness **F**reedom **E**mpowerment” program delivery did not occur; however, it was quickly revised to deliver this program material by email initially, followed with one-to-one telephone support sessions to explore this material to provide the domestic abuse awareness education to the service user. During this time the on-line SAFE was created and the delivery of this program was delivered by e-learning portal for service users to access as part of their support plan. The contents of this program would cover topics in that it was designed to support the service user to:

- Gain a better understanding of the causes and effects of domestic abuse
- Explore the different types of domestic abuse
- Understand the cycle of abuse
- Examine the behaviours in a healthy relationship
- Explores the impact domestic abuse has on children
- Look at potential warning signs for future relationships
- Identify core values, empowering you to take these values into future relationships
- Consider your overall wellbeing
- If the client was seeking assistance out of these hours or as an emergency there was a pre-recording message for guidance and offered them the National Domestic Abuse helpline.

14.10.10 **Refuges**

14.10.11 If a service user were seeking Refuge, this service remained operational, working around and in conjunction with statutory agencies for survivors seeking accommodation. Although this period of working did come with the difficulties, to communicate with these statutory professionals (due to them working from home), and or some Refuges not accepting any new services users – the service still operated with a duty of care to help and or assist person(s) contacting the service for assistance in fleeing.

14.10.12 The same regulations applied to those persons actively seeking refuge and applying to EDAN Lincs available refuge space. Depending on which refuge they were accessing – EDAN Lincs has both self-contained units and a multi-occupancy unit. Primarily the move on from these projects was slowed due to the availability of houses, whilst the country was in lockdown and the slow progression of available houses available at the time via social housing.

14.10.13 With regards to services users in refuge at the time, the pandemic seemed to take away from the needs, feelings, and experiences of this vulnerable client group, due to the restrictions around face to face and delivery of the service at times may have appeared robotic with necessary needs being provided i.e., food, health and virtual house viewings when coming available.

#### **14.11 Potential gaps in service provision, alongside potential barriers to accessing services.**

14.11.1 **LCC Children's Health** did not identify any gaps in service provision or potential barriers to accessing services for Janina and the children.

14.11.2 The **GP Practice** did not consider there were any gaps in service provision, or any barriers to their ability to access their services. Across their records it is evident that Janina and the family were able to access the practice and communicate their presenting symptoms effectively. The entry from 2015 on Jonas's record noting 'poor English', does not appear that this was a barrier to him effectively communicating with clinicians. Translator services are available via phone for use within consultations where need is indicated.

14.11.3 The **School - LCC Education** did not identify any gaps in service provision or potential barriers to accessing services for Janina and the children.

14.11.4 **ULHT** did not identify any gaps in service provision or potential barriers to accessing services for Janina and the children.

In summarising what was known, the panel also considered the following:

#### **14.12 Whether family, friends or colleagues were aware of any abusive (controlling) behaviour from the alleged perpetrator to the victim, prior to the homicide.**

14.12.1 There are a number of accounts from a variety of friends and work colleagues which indicate that family and friends were aware of the allegedly abusive (controlling) behaviour. It is also clear from their accounts that the behaviour was not recognised in the terms of coercive or controlling behaviours, or the associated risks at the end of a relationship. The witnesses assumed that because Janina appeared unconcerned, that there was nothing for them to worry about. None of the behaviours were reported to authorities. This is considered in framing recommendations.

14.12.2 Janina was looking for a second job. She had expressed her intention to Laima to be financially independent for her later intention to leave Jonas. Janina did not report their finances or economic abuse as a barrier to her leaving at that specific time, as she wanted to remain until the children were older. Janina had also revealed to Frank (gym owner at 6.5.3) that she was waiting for the youngest children to get a bit older before leaving and was looking for a second job to get money to support herself and the children, for when she left.

**14.13 Whether there were any barriers experienced by the victim or her family/friends/colleagues in reporting any abuse in Lincolnshire or elsewhere, including whether she knew how to report domestic abuse should she have wanted to.**

14.13.1 The wider community information and academic research highlighted at Section 6.7 and 6.8 indicate there may have been barriers, which specifically impact Eastern European women in this country. These are barriers that Janina was either not aware of or were embedded in her everyday life. It appears that Janina and her friends discussed issues within the relationship, including threats of suicide, but they did not appear to identify these as coercive or controlling. This may be because of cultural challenges or a lack of wider community awareness on the risks associate with the period at the end of the relationship. It is unclear if Janina had researched or sought any support or information.

**14.14 Whether there were opportunities for professionals to ‘routinely enquire’ as to any domestic abuse experienced by the victim that were missed.**

14.14.1 Whilst Janina had routine medical appointments, and whilst routine enquiry was not always documented, Janina made no disclosure and did not reveal anything of concern. The records which explored routine enquiry were 9 years prior and therefore considered too distant to be relevant for domestic abuse assessment for this review. However, it is important to note that even at that stage, there were no missed opportunities. From the information collected from agencies involved in this review, there do not appear to be any missed opportunities<sup>85</sup>

14.14.2 School records did reference that the children were ‘hit’ by dad as a punishment but were not concerned to make a referral and they also highlight ‘arguing’ at home, and these issues were risk assessed and discussed with Janina, and no referral was made to CSC There was no clear information that domestic abuse was occurring. The school had no records that an Early Help Assessment (EHA) was considered.

**14.15 Whether there were opportunities for agency intervention in relation to domestic abuse regarding the victim or alleged perpetrator that was missed.**

14.15.1 Looking at the agencies who participated in this review, there do not appear to be any opportunities for agency intervention, with either the victim or perpetrator. Despite robust processes followed for this review, no other agency or community group came forward

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<sup>85</sup> Referenced section 13.

with information to suggest they had had contact with the family, or any information to assist this review.

## **15. Conclusions**

15.1 From review of the chronologies and IMRs, it does not appear that any agency involved in this review held evidence or suspicion of Janina experiencing any physical abuse or other coercive and controlling behaviour from Jonas. Physical domestic abuse is explicit and vivid and tangible.

15.2 It is important for all agencies to have the tools and confidence required to identify potential victims, sensitively, intervene at an early stage where and if possible, and refer on as appropriate for comprehensive risk assessment and mitigation. There were no points where information sharing could have potentially led to a different outcome in this case.

15.3 Domestic abuse in the form of coercive and controlling behaviour is not always obvious. It is more subtle but there are multiple indicators, as discussed above, to which Janina was vulnerable. In hindsight, there were signs and indications (clues), that were shared amongst her friends, but not with agencies, that Jonas was potentially dangerous as Jonas exhibited jealousy; he was lacking in confidence about the relationship and had told Janina he would kill her and himself if she left. Taking Monckton Smith's Homicide Timeline into consideration, Janina and Jonas featured at most stages.

15.4 The way that Janina presented to friends and acquaintances was in contrast to the generalised presentation of Lithuanian females who may be in domestically abusive relationships (described at 6.7.7). Janina did not see herself as a victim. Evidence suggests that she did not see or recognise the danger from Jonas. The way that she lived with Jonas is believed to have become her 'norm'. Janina had told him repeatedly that she wanted a divorce. He was her husband and her first identified adult relationship, so whilst it is unknown if it was a common feature, the possessiveness and jealousy were something that she had certainly experienced in the last two years together. In this case, financial dependence was a factor in her decision making and Janina had indicated that she was waiting to 'save enough money' to support herself and the children. Stigma did not appear to concern her, as she spoke openly about her intent to leave. Whilst she did not have a family support network, she had close contact with Laima. Janina also did not present with any concerns about domestic abusive behaviours.

15.5 Whilst she had disclosed her unhappiness and intent to leave Jonas, on the night that Janina was murdered, she expressed no safety concerns to anyone, which indicated to friends that she felt safe, and she didn't think he would do anything to her. Despite the fact that he was angry that evening, had shouted at her in the taxi and previously threatened suicide, none of her friends deemed that she was in danger. This false sense of safety prevented her from seeing that she was at risk, at the end of a relationship that Jonas did not want to end.

15.6 In this case, these indicators or risk factors were not understood or recognised by Janina, or by her many friends or family. The subtleties of controlling behaviours were not seen as risk, and therefore risks were not disclosed to or identified to a single agency. As no

disclosures were made, professionals could not have exercised their professional curiosity or offer support, advice, and guidance. It is implausible that an agency could have intervened.

15.7 Despite the academic research on cultural challenges impacting women from Eastern European backgrounds<sup>86</sup>, in this review the panel were unable to find evidence that Janina exhibited similar vulnerabilities. In fact (as described at 15.4), she had been open about her desire to leave Jonas, did not exhibit fear of stigma, appeared to be financially adept but she also did not appear to fear Jonas. However, her lack of awareness of how his behaviour was controlling, or indeed her awareness of the risks at the point of separation, may have prevented her from seeking support.

15.8 The overriding theme from this review indicates that much more could be done to raise public awareness of what coercive and controlling behaviours are and how these contribute to the escalation of risk and dangerousness. Public awareness of risks needs to be informed by relevant academic research to increase opportunities to intervene. Both men and women are at risk. The point of separation can be a period of heightened risk, and this is not generally understood by the wider public.

15.9 The police investigation and the subsequent DARDR review process identified behaviours which were controlling, but these had not been brought to the attention of professionals who could have assessed the risk or provide support to Janina. Many of the behaviours can appear as regular stresses and strains in many families due to work pressures, financial struggles, and day to day relationship challenges. These behaviours were not recognised by the friends and associates of either Janina or Jonas. This signified to the panel that public awareness is still limited in the identification of heightened risks, particularly at the point of separation. It was agreed that there is a need to raise public awareness about the factors that increase risk, and importantly how to seek relevant support and help.

## **16. Lessons Learned by agencies in this review (and identified good practice).**

16.1 For **LCC Children's Health**: there were 2 areas of generic learning but nothing specific for this case. It is the expectation that practitioners will ask the domestic abuse questions at all contacts with patients if safe to do so and complete the recognised health template to document that it has been asked. Practitioners should confirm with all patients whether they require an interpreter if English is not the patients first language. The information reviewed for this DARDR was from 9 years ago. Since this time Children's Health have embedded the expectation that practitioners ask the domestic abuse question and confirm if an interpreter is required for patients if English is not their 1<sup>st</sup> language.

16.1.1 Children's Health actively promote health practitioners to ask the domestic abuse question and document this in the health record on SystemOne (IT system for record keeping). It is clearly recorded within the universal and individual need standard operating guidance that there is an expectation that the domestic abuse question is asked at every contact. The individual need standard operating guidance has just been reviewed and is being shared with staff within team meetings, for the message to be being reiterated.

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<sup>86</sup> Referenced at section 6.8

16.1.2 The template on SystmOne has recently been updated to enable practitioners to easily record whether they have asked the domestic abuse question or not with a text box to add a narrative if they respond that they are suffering domestic abuse or if they are unable to ask the domestic abuse question. When a health practitioner receives a disclosure of domestic abuse, there is a follow-on template which indicates the use of DASH<sup>87</sup> form and referral onto domestic abuse services and MARAC<sup>88</sup> if required.

16.1.3 Every baby when born is provided with a personal child health record “red book” and there is a page inserted which was sourced by Children’s Health about local domestic abuse services. It also provides advice on where to go if you are a victim of domestic abuse. This is a universal resource for all families.

16.1.4 Children’s Health have revised information shared with health staff regarding the use of interpreters and the need to ensure that all families are offered the use of an interpreter if English is not their first language. This information has been cascaded out to all Children’s Health teams by email and shared within team meetings. As part of the annual record keeping audit the use of interpreters is monitored and any lessons learnt shared with staff to raise their awareness of the need to use interpreters.

16.2 **GP Practice** did not record any lessons learned or new recommendations in relation to this review. Effective practice does appear to have been followed in this case, the family were engaging with routine screening/immunisations and were presenting with their individual medical concerns, which were then acted upon appropriately with medication therapies, scans/pathology investigations and referral for services. Safeguarding training, including domestic violence awareness, is in place for practice staff. There are no recorded safeguarding concerns from practice contacts during this period. During the period reviewed, the concerns presented by the individuals were acted upon and escalated as clinically appropriate. Therefore, there are no clinical recommendations for changes of practice. The practice reviewed the information that is accessible to patients, both in the waiting room and online via the website, with the view to making safeguarding signposting information visible and translatable, through digital resources.

16.3 The **School - LCC Education** did not identify any gaps in service provision or potential barriers to accessing services for Janina and the children. Whilst there was no concern about domestically abusive behaviour, the school has looked to improve practice. Since 2021, the school now has 5 Designated Safeguarding Leads<sup>89</sup> (DSLs) within school who meet regularly to discuss families and any concerns. Every 6 weeks reports are printed of the whole school so that patterns can be determined between children within the same family. Since this DARDR, they have designed a new system for contacting parents to check if medical opinions have been sought. The school have created a front door (teachers) and back

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<sup>87</sup> The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Identification. / DOWNLOAD DASH. The Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH 2009-2023) Risk Identification, Assessment and Management Model was implemented across all police services in the UK from March 2009

<sup>88</sup> MARAC is a multi-agency meeting which facilitates the risk assessment process for individuals and their families who are at risk of domestic violence and abuse. Organisations are invited to share information with a view to identifying those at "very high" risk of domestic violence and abuse. Where very high risk has been identified, a multi-agency action plan is developed to support all those at risk

<sup>89</sup> The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is the person appointed to take responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) across early years settings and schools.

door (DSLs) system to ensure such issues will be followed up with parents. Before the implementation of the DSLs, the school would do a lot of the 'follow up' of parents whereas now teaching staff will have the initial conversation and DSLs will monitor and chase any follow up if required.

16.4 **ULHT:** There are no lessons learned or new recommendations for ULHT in relation to this review.

16.5 **Policing:** Lincolnshire police have embraced the national changes in policing domestic abuse. The Femicide Census 2020<sup>90</sup>, highlighted that a woman is killed by a man every three days in the UK and domestic abuse makes up 18% of all recorded crime in England and Wales. The Census has consistently evidenced that separation is a risk factor for intimate partner femicides, or more accurately, a trigger for violent, abusive and/or controlling men. Linked to this research, and a positive development, for the first time in December 2021, the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing sought to address the inconsistencies in policing responses and create a national focus on supporting police forces to prioritise Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)<sup>91</sup> related crimes. They developed and published a new police VAWG framework, informed by experts in policing, government and the VAWG sector. Every police force has had to develop an action plan and a problem profile outlining what they are doing at local level. The VAWG Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA) predicts that nearly all forms of VAWG are expected to rise in the coming year, with the biggest threats from domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences, child sexual abuse and exploitation and tech enabled VAWG such as online stalking and harassment.

### **Good Practice Identified**

16.6 In terms of good practice, it is noted that ULHT is an active participant in DA Partnership business. As well as representation at the various Partnership meetings, the Organisation (via its Safeguarding Team) disseminates the local resources shared/available to them (e.g. posters for displaying in clinical areas; information leaflets for professionals/patients; training opportunities; engagement events; learning from DARDs, etc.) to all Divisional Teams. National campaigns and resources are also shared, when available. Local and National campaigns are shared with their internal Communications Team, when scheduled. In addition, the Organisation has a dedicated DA section within the Safeguarding hub on the intranet; ensuring all staff have access to the most up to date policies, processes, referral/signposting links and resources to support their management of DA disclosures and/or indicators for patients and/or colleagues. The intranet also includes a link to the Partnership's Professionals' Hub.

16.7 The Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) highlighted good practice, as they are the commissioners and strategic lead for health agencies. In safeguarding they are also a conduit between General Practice. Domestic Abuse is managed as an integral element of safeguarding arrangements with Lincolnshire health partners and therefore sits within each of the organisations respective safeguarding governance arrangements. The LICB deliver domestic abuse training and work collaboratively with all partner agencies. All health

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<sup>90</sup> [www.femicidecensus.org](http://www.femicidecensus.org)

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/our-work/vawg/vawg-stra-public-official.pdf> and <https://www.npcc.police.uk/our-work/violence-against-women-and-girls>

organisations promote Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Specialist Service (LDASS) and have information available for staff and patients.

16.8 All Children's Services staff have to complete domestic abuse LSCP training on a 3 yearly basis and also follow the 6-year pathway. The compliance of which is reported on annually. Practice Supervisors attend all MARACs to participate in multi-agency decision making of domestic abuse cases open to the service. The Children's Services Policy and Procedures manual contains a large section on domestic abuse with links to relevant further guidance and legislation. There are regular briefings and partnership communication regarding DASHs, referral routes to specialist services. In March 2023 all staff received communication regarding the Homicide Timeline and A five-minute briefing on Domestic Abuse was circulated to all CS staff in August 2022 and is available on SharePoint and shared with staff on induction. Through collaborative audits in Children's Services, various aspects of domestic abuse are scrutinised, and action plans implemented to address any identified gaps in training or practice.

16.9 **LDASS:** highlighted the current progression in respect of community awareness in Lincolnshire, as a positive change in the community since the commissioning of this DARDR. Primarily the focus has been driven towards those communities which have a multi-cultural setting in those areas of Lincolnshire where there is a higher proportion of communities from different countries, and English not being their first language. The focus is awareness of domestic abuse in the communities for those persons in the community to sign post to the relevant domestic abuse services.

16.9.1 LDASS domestic abuse service newly commissioned on 1st April 2023 with an element of this service referred to as '**Outreach Engagement Team**'. Part of the remit of this team is to encourage "**DA Champions**" in the community, and as a group of likeminded individuals to bring about working together to bring positive change in the community. The DA service web page and digital platform presents the information.<sup>82</sup>

- The concept of this is to encourage and bring to the forefront that domestic abuse is every one's business, and to provide interested parties the knowledge as to how and whom to sign post and to be the early proactive intervention, if they become aware of a colleague, member of the public; family member or friend, who maybe suffering from domestic abuse.
- The idea is that if you are an interested person in becoming a DA champion, it is not an additional job. Rather, it is that you come along to one day training day, and as professionals, business owners, members of the public or a survivor themselves, you will be provided with the tools of being that person who knows a little more about Domestic Abuse, to be able to raise awareness within your own community, groups, or agency. You would be better equipped to spot those domestic abuse signs and have an understanding of how to sign post people to get that help they may need.
- At the time of the DARDR panel, LDASS had received 122 people who were interested in becoming a DA Champion and 60 people had registered to attend a one-day training in October 2023, with an additional day training being scheduled for March 2024, where at this time there is 64 people who have registered to attend the day training.



- The Outreach Engagement team role is to go out into the communities and to date have attended 154 meetings or events with 39 formal presentations about the LDASS service to organisations such as housing, the DWP, the Police, community connectors, volunteer organisations and more.
- As an added caveat the newly commissioned service has a new digital platform available for any person who is seeking support around domestic abuse – this is for both individuals and or professionals for advice, guidance and or referring to the service. Persons can access the SAFE program direct from this platform.

16.10 Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership have an ongoing initiative to support local business engagement, particularly aiming to engage those where safeguarding is not part of their everyday business. Identifying domestic abuse is part of an employer's safeguarding responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and accessing the training enables them to demonstrate the effectiveness of their safeguarding procedures, create a culture of vigilance and identify when members of their workforce may be at risk of domestic abuse. The four key aims of the engagement programme are to support employers to; design and develop safeguarding/domestic abuse procedures and protocols, develop and deliver briefings to key staff, provide signposting of information and services to employees, and to introduce local services to employees including how to access them. Alongside the rolling programme there is also the opportunity for local businesses to attend an annual conference showcasing the work that has taken place each year, learning from those with lived experience and hearing from guest speakers to inspire more employers to work with this initiative. Jonas's employers have confirmed their attendance at this year's conference, as have other local businesses who employ high numbers of Eastern Europeans.

## **17. Recommendations**

17.1 The panel examined the contributing agency responses and agreed that in this review, although unusual, there were no specific individual agency recommendations to be made. Much of the recorded agency involvement with Janina and Jonas was limited or historical in nature and no risks had been identified at any stage.

17.2 In addition, locally in Lincolnshire, a range of proactive activity is currently ongoing in the area regarding Eastern European engagement (attached as appendix 3). This work is being monitored by the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership and it is for that reason that a local recommendation is not required.

17.3 This review has highlighted, that despite recent academic research, there is limited national public information or campaigns which highlight the increased risks posed by victims during and after separation. There were behaviours that could have indicated risk; however, these were not highlighted to any agency and were not recognised by the friends and associates of either Janina or Jonas.

17.4 In Lincolnshire there is specific reference to the domestic homicide timeline and the heightened risks at separation in all of the basic training on offer for both professionals and businesses with access to resources to support safety planning in these circumstances. A case study has been created from a previous DARDR which is utilised in training to demonstrate the risks involved. The domestic homicide timeline is also used as a reference

tool in MARAC for considering risk management measures. The following is therefore proposed as a national recommendation:

**Recommendation:**

17.5 It is recommended that the Home Office instigate and deliver a proactive communications campaign, delivered by national media and community safety partnerships to highlight domestic abuse risks, specifically ‘point of separation’ risks. The campaign should be nationally monitored to ensure that national best practice is identified and the dissemination and promotion of that material to highlight domestic abuse risks is widely communicated, to encompass awareness and understanding for all cultures.

**Appendix 1: COVID**

17.5.1 The DARDR review period is from **01.11.2012 to 01.05.2022** and Janina was murdered on 01.05.2022. The COVID period including lockdown would have been relevant to her interaction with friends, family, and agencies, particularly during 2021.

17.5.2 In summary, at the start of 2020, news reports of a new virus emerged from Wuhan, China. On 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020, the government published the first coronavirus guidance page on GOV.UK. A few weeks later, the UK recorded its first case of coronavirus. The World Health Organisation declared the novel coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic on 11.03.2020.

17.5.3 First national lockdown (March to June 2020): On 23.03.2020, the Prime Minister announced the first national lockdown in an address to the country. The impact of this was that England was in national lockdown between late March and June 2020. All “non-essential” high street businesses were closed, and people were ordered to stay at home, permitted to leave for essential purposes only, such as buying food or for medical reasons. From May 2020, the laws were slowly relaxed, and people were permitted to leave home for outdoor recreation (beyond exercise) from 13.05.2020. On 01.06.2020, the restriction on leaving home was replaced with a requirement to be at home overnight, and people were permitted to meet outside in groups of up to six people.

17.5.4 Minimal lockdown restrictions (July to September 2020). Most lockdown restrictions were lifted on 04.07.2020. Most hospitality businesses were permitted to reopen. New health and safety guidance on operating businesses “COVID securely” was published. Gatherings up to thirty people were legally permitted, although the Government was still recommending people avoid gatherings larger than six.

17.5.5 Reimposing restrictions (September to October 2020). On 14.09.2020, restrictions for gathering in England were tightened and people were once again legally prohibited from meeting more than six people socially. The new “rule of six” applied both indoors and outdoors. Eleven days later, pubs, bars and restaurants were told they had to shut between 10pm and 6am.

17.5.6 During this period, a range of local restrictions were imposed across England. On the 14.10.2020, the Government rationalised local restrictions by introducing a “three tier system”. At first, most of the country was placed in the least restrictive tier one, which had similar restrictions to the previous national rules. As time went on, more of the country was placed in the higher two tiers.

17.5.7 Second national lockdown (November 2020). On 05.11.2020, national restrictions were reintroduced in England in response to rising cases in the UK. The national lockdown was due to end on 26.11.2020, to be replaced by local restrictions (“tiers”) across all of England. During the second national lockdown, non-essential high street businesses were closed, and people were prohibited from meeting those not in their “support bubble” inside. People could leave home to meet one person from outside their support bubble outdoors.

17.5.8 Reintroducing a tiered system (December 2020). On 02.12.2020, the tiered system was reintroduced with modifications. The tier four rules were like those imposed during the second national lockdown. Restrictions on hospitality businesses were stricter and most locations were initially placed in tiers two and three. On 19.12.2020, the Prime Minister announced that a fourth tier would be introduced, following concerns about a rising number of coronavirus cases due to a new variant (what was to become known as the Alpha variant, first identified in Kent). The tier four rules were like those imposed during the second national lockdown. On 30.12.2020, after the first review of tiers under the new system, around 75% of the country was placed under tier four restrictions.

17.5.9 Third national lockdown (January to March 2021). Following concerns that the four-tier system was not containing the spread of the Alpha variant, on Monday 04.01.2021 at 8pm, the Prime Minister announced the third national lockdown commencing on 06.01.2021. The rules during the third lockdown were more like those in the first lockdown. People were once again told to stay at home. However, people could still form support bubbles (if eligible) and some gatherings were exempted from the gatherings ban (for example, religious services and some small weddings were permitted).

17.5.10 Leaving lockdown (March to July 2021). On 08.03.2021, the UK began a phased exit from lockdown as most people were receiving their first dose of a coronavirus vaccine. Instead of a return to the tiered system, the Government said it planned to lift restrictions in all areas at the same time, as the level of infection was broadly similar across England.

17.5.11 It is important to acknowledge that the national vaccination programme increased the pressure on those working within all agencies but specifically the National Health Service and schools and education in a way never before experienced.

## **Appendix 2: Reference Documents**

17.5.12 An analysis of minoritisation in Domestic Abuse Related Reviews in England and Wales

17.5.13 Khatidja Chantler K.Chantler@mmu.ac.uk, Kelly Bracewell, [...], and Megan Ward+3View all authors and affiliations OnlineFirst <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183221133052>

17.5.14 HM Government strategy for Ending Violence against Women and Girls 2016-2020

17.5.15 Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews published by the Home Office December 2016

17.5.16 Domestic Abuse Related Reviews: Key Findings from analysis of Domestic Abuse Related Reviews published by Home Office December 2016

17.5.17 Lincolnshire Council web sites:

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/crime-prevention/domestic-abuse>

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/crime-prevention/domestic-abuse/4>

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/65876/domestic-abuse-policy>

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/69526/beds-made-available-to-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/directory-record/72828/contracts-commissioned-to-deliver-domestic-abuse-services-in-2023-and-2024>

17.5.18 Lincolnshire Police website publishes a range of guidance and advice to members of the public in respect of domestic abuse which can be accessed on the Force website (the site also has links to a range of additional relevant policies, for example stalking and harassment) at:

<https://www.lincs.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/how-to-report-domestic-abuse/?>

<https://www.lincs.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/support-organisations/>

<https://www.lincs.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/daa/domestic-abuse/what-is-domestic-abuse/>

### **Appendix 3:**

#### **Culturally Specific Engagement**

17.5.19 Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (LDAP) have recognised the need in Lincolnshire to enhance the engagement of all communities and more specifically, the Eastern European Community. Informed by a local needs assessment and prior learning reviews the current offer of support is summarised below. Activity is regularly reported on and monitored via the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Programme Board.

17.5.20 **Commissioned Service** – LDASS.org.uk – includes the following provision;

- **Digital Platform** - has the option for users to choose which language to access it in
- **IDVA** – Independent Domestic Violence Advocates: the service offers an inclusive approach to recruitment and has employed an individual of Eastern European nationality who is able to work with victims from the Eastern European community particularly if there are initial barriers to engagement.
- **Interpreter services** - as required **case-by-case** most contact is via phone or electronic devices and interpreters are engaged for these communications on a case by case basis.
- **Outreach & Engagement Team** –

- **DA Champions** - Domestic Abuse Champions are the eyes and ears around the county helping to support proactive early intervention for those experiencing domestic abuse. Events aimed at professionals, business owners, survivors and members of the public who share a vision for raising awareness in the community. Whilst this initiative is aimed at all cultures there is current representation from the Eastern European Communities.
- **Community Engagement Events** – continued program of awareness raising events including specific targeting of areas with higher Eastern European population.
- **Surviving to Thriving** – community groups run by the community for the community, the outreach and engagement team support with set up and delivery of empowerment activities to build confidence of survivors and encourage them to thrive.
- **Scan codes** – posters and stickers with scan codes to support non-English speaking victims to access the website where they can access information in a language of their choice.
- **Libraries Initiative** – initially planned from January 2024 in one Eastern European Community with a view to extending wider across the county. Monthly drop-in session with access to specialist support including translators and legal services.

17.5.21

**LDAP:**

- **DA Training** – all training for professionals explores barriers in understanding and accessing DA services, including cultural perspectives on understanding risks in specific communities and encouraging the use of professional curiosity.
- **MARAC Chairs Events** – learning events for MARAC chairs – Awareness of DA in Eastern European communities and cultural perspectives is part of the wider plan of knowledge sharing.

17.5.22

**Communications:**

- **Social media and communications campaigns** - including 16 days of Action, are ongoing in collaboration with partner agencies and offer specific content for Eastern European communities.
- **DA Newsletter** – Monthly newsletter distributed to partners with links to specific services and resources including those pertaining to Eastern European communities.
- **Crimestoppers** – campaign currently in the planning stages to be delivered jointly with Lincolnshire Police and Lincolnshire County Council with a specific theme of raising awareness in Eastern European communities of understanding domestic abuse, overcoming myths about the UK system of support and promotion of local services.
- **Lincolnshire County Council website** – content is accessible via an option to translate to chosen language. Links to Eastern European organizations are available for public and professionals to access advice, guidance and resources.

17.5.23

**Business Engagement:**

- **Local Employer Engagement** ongoing initiative to support Lincolnshire businesses to meet their responsibilities regarding Domestic Abuse under the Health and Safety

at Work Act 1974. The four key aims of the engagement programme are to support employers to; design and develop safeguarding/domestic abuse procedures and protocols, develop and deliver briefings to key staff, provide signposting of information and services to employees, and to introduce local services to employees including how to access them. 2023 includes a targeted approach to businesses known to employ a high rate of Eastern European employees.

- ***Business Engagement Conference*** – annual conference to inspire and motivate employers to engage in the ongoing program of support (see above). Conference invites in 2023 have included a specific approach to businesses known to employ a high rate of Eastern European employees.