



domestic
abuse
commissioner

Ministry of Justice Murder Sentencing Consultation Response from the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales

Role of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 established the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to provide public leadership on issues relating to domestic abuse. The role of the Commissioner is to encourage good practice in preventing domestic abuse; identifying adult and child victims and survivors, as well as perpetrators of domestic abuse; and improving the protection and provision of support from agencies and government to people affected by domestic abuse.

Terms and scope of the consultation

Prior to addressing the questions raised in this consultation, I wish to highlight my concerns with the nature and scope of this consultation. The way in which domestic homicides are sentenced requires wholesale reform, which is why in March 2021, with the then Victims Commissioner, I wrote to the then Lord Chancellor calling for a review of sentencing as a fundamental first step in wider systemic change¹. In the letter we said:

“We have been in contact with families bereaved by domestic abuse where the sentences given to their daughters’ murderers are far more lenient than compared to sentences typically given in other homicide cases”.

We continue to see these examples. Many of the families campaigning individually, through Killed Women or with other domestic abuse sector organisations, are rightly raising these concerns. Sentences for domestic homicide all too often do not reflect the seriousness of the crime, and the disparities between sentences depending on the circumstances of the murder represents a significant injustice. Equally, an understanding of domestic abuse must be much better incorporated into consideration of cases where victims kill their abuser.

¹ [Joint letter from Victims’ Commissioner and Domestic Abuse Commissioner on domestic homicide - Victims Commissioner](#)

Domestic homicide is complex and often follows periods of sustained and escalating abuse for many victims and survivors.² As recognised in the Foreword to this consultation, the government's proposed reforms to the existing murder sentencing framework follow the publication of the Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review (the "Sentencing Review") conducted by Clare Wade KC. The Sentencing Review, which was published in March 2023, considered whether the current law and sentencing guidelines around domestic homicides are fit for purpose and sets out proposed areas for reform. A total of 17 recommendations were made by Clare Wade KC, of which 11 were wholly or partially accepted by the government. Whilst I welcome the work which has been undertaken in implementing the accepted recommendations, I remain disappointed that the government has only committed to piecemeal reform in this area, contrary to the spirit of the Sentencing Review.

The purpose of the Sentencing Review was to determine whether individuals who are killed by their partners and their families were being disproportionately impacted by existing sentencing frameworks and to seek opportunities for reform. Yet despite a clear, considered and independent case for wholesale change being presented to the government, this has not been brought forward. I reiterate my call on the government to reconsider their position and implement the recommendations made in the Sentencing Review in their entirety.

The Sentencing Review shows that current legislation gives little specific consideration to domestic homicides and is not designed to respond to such murders. The review sets out compelling evidence as to why there should be no individual increase in the minimum sentences for domestic homicides, highlighting the irregularities in the law caused by Schedule 21 of the Sentencing Act 2020.

Special consideration must be given to these types of homicides when compared to other kinds, such as those relating to public space violence. Special consideration for domestic homicides must stretch beyond increasing sentencing starting points, but properly reflect the dynamics of domestic abuse and the harm caused. As stated in the Sentencing Review, many of the issues with domestic sentencing arise as a result of a lack of understanding of domestic abuse, rather than a lack of power for judges to start sentencing at higher points.

² Monckton-Smith, J. (2019) *Intimate Partner Femicide: using Foucauldian analysis to track an eight stage relationship progression to homicide*, University of Gloucestershire

A key finding of the Sentencing Review was that the broad lack of understanding of controlling and coercive behaviour was a driving factor behind inequitable sentencing outcomes. This applied to both where a perpetrator of abuse murdered their partner, and where a victim of abuse killed their perpetrator.

Recommendations to drive improvements in this area were made in the Sentencing Review by Ms Wade KC, including to have mandatory training for lawyers and judges working in this area to enhance how cases are built and presented, as well to create a specific sentencing framework for coercive and controlling behaviour which went beyond using Schedule 21 as a vehicle for increasing sentencing for domestic homicides.

I am disappointed that the full recommendations have not been accepted and implemented by the government. Doing so would achieve the aim of better reflecting the impact of domestic homicide and addressing the disparities in the sentencing regime. The terms of reference of the review highlight that the purpose of this review was not to compare to wider sentencing guidelines, but to ascertain 'how the current law applies to cases of domestic homicide' and to 'identify options for reform where appropriate'.³ The review fulfilled this purpose, and this implementing the recommendations in the whole would be a better way to address the fundamental issues at the heart of domestic homicide sentencing than what is addressed in this consultation. I believe that the questions being asked in this consultation do not get to the heart of the problems that need to be addressed.

My concern is that the proposed amendments to Schedule 21 would not wholly address the problem of disproportionate domestic homicide sentences and could result in further disparities in sentences depending on the circumstances of a domestic homicide, and this could disproportionately affect more vulnerable and marginalised individuals.

I support the government addressing the disparities that Schedule 21 has caused and will continue to cause. I strongly recommend that the Government implement the full suite of recommendations made in the Sentencing Review. This would increase sentences by introducing statutory aggravating factors for the following:

- murders at the end of a relationship;
- murders which take place following a history of coercive control;
- overkill; and
- murders by strangulation.

³ [Homicide Sentencing Review: Terms of Reference - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612212/Homicide_Sentencing_Review_Terms_of_Reference.pdf)

I also strongly urge the government to design and deliver a programme of work to ensure CCB is understood, investigated and put before the court.

A case study is provided that illustrates the problems with domestic homicide sentences at the end of this consultation response.

Recommendations

1. Disparities between domestic homicide murder sentences are an injustice and must be addressed. The government must address the issues created by Schedule 21 and the higher thresholds introduced which are creating unjust comparisons in sentencing.
2. I urge the government to implement Clare Wade KC's recommendations in full in order to truly consider and reflect an understanding of domestic abuse within domestic homicide murder sentencing.
3. This must be through amending Schedule 21 to create statutory aggravating factors for the following:
 - a. Murders at the end of a relationship (this is being pursued through the Criminal Justice Bill);
 - b. Murders with extreme violence or overkill;
 - c. Murders committed by strangulation;
 - d. Murders following controlling and coercive behaviour.
4. Training on coercive and controlling behaviour must be at the centre of reforms made by government to address domestic homicide sentencing. I urge Government to consider establishing, in collaboration with the specialist violence against women and girls and domestic abuse sectors, a model through which coercive and controlling behaviour is assessed by the courts.
5. I urge the government to reconsider the recommendation to include use of a weapon as a statutory aggravating factor, as this may result in increased sentences for women who kill their abusers – who are proportionally more likely to use weapons.
6. I urge the government to remove from the statute books the partial defence to murder of sexual infidelity. This should be mirrored in the manslaughter guidelines.
7. I recommend that the government put significant resource and effort into using learning from our HALT report⁴ on criminal justice and from Domestic Homicide Reviews – not only to change sentencing disparity but to prevent

⁴ [Summary-of-Findings-Criminal-Justice-Domestic-Homicide-Oversight-Mechanism.pdf \(domesticabusecommissioner.uk\)](#)

future murders through early intervention and consistency in practice in holding perpetrators to account.

8. I urge the government to implement mandatory public safety psychological testing before release of perpetrators who have had murder reduced to manslaughter using a psychological ('partial') defence.
9. I recommend the government places a requirement on judges to assist the jury with agreed directions on domestic abuse/CCB in domestic homicide cases to explain nature and effect of domestic abuse/CCB.
10. The letter I wrote alongside the Victims Commissioner on this issue was sent in March 2021. The Sentencing Review was published in 2023. I have been calling for change on this for a long time. I therefore recommend that the government sets up a task force that reflects the work programme the government will put in place to ensure that the Sentencing Review recommendations are implemented properly, with adequate resource, training and oversight.

Murder Sentencing Consultation Questions

Q1.1: Should a minimum term starting point, above the baseline starting point of 15 years, apply to cases of murder preceded by a history of controlling or coercive behaviour against the murder victim or not?

As highlighted in the Wade Review, coercive and controlling behaviour is not given adequate consideration in the sentencing of domestic homicides. A key factor behind this is the lack of understanding of this form of abuse across the criminal justice system, with it also requiring a nuanced understanding of power and control, trauma, gender inequality and misogyny and cultural dynamics. This is a problem both where perpetrators kill their partners following a campaign of coercive control, as well as where victims and survivors who have experienced this form of abuse go on to kill their partners.

The Wade Review found that there is a disconnect between the substantive changes brought about by the law to criminalise coercive control and the sentencing framework which is used when it exists within domestic murders. There continues to be a lack of understanding as to the insidiousness of this type of offending, as well as how to effectively build cases in court to reflect the experience of victims in controlling and coercive relationships which ultimately end in murder.

Whilst the offence of controlling and coercive behaviour was established in 2015, knowledge of the types of behaviours which underpin and constitute this offence, how to assist with identification of these patterns and knowledge of how to build evidence of this offence is still limited. In the year ending March 2023, the police recorded 43,774 offences of coercive control;⁵ however, there were only 634 convictions for this offence in the year ending June 2023.⁶⁷ This demonstrates how difficult it can be to prosecute these cases, even where the victim is alive to provide evidence of the patterns of behaviour which they experienced. Where a victim has been killed, this presents a further evidential barrier to effective case building. With this in mind, I believe it is crucial to adopt a domestic abuse framework which centres around coercive control and empowers judges and lawyers to have a more robust understanding of this pattern of behaviour.

⁵ Office for National Statistics (2023) [Domestic abuse prevalence and trends, England and Wales: year ending March 2023](#)

⁶ Ministry of Justice (2023) [Criminal Justice System Statistics publication: Outcomes by Offence 2010 to 2023](#)

⁷ The disparity in timelines is due to this data being collected differently by the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office. Whilst individual case outcomes cannot be tracked from when they are reported to finalisation, these statistics serve to paint a picture of the small proportion of cases of coercive control which end in convictions compared to the volume of this offence which is being reported to the police.

If controlling and coercive behaviour is made into a statutory aggravating factor, this will serve to increase the starting point of a sentence where a homicide follows a pattern of abuse, as judges will have to take it into account. If this is introduced, the change would have to be underpinned by additional training for judges and lawyers as part of the implementation to ensure that this is appropriately considered in future sentencing decisions. This would replace the need for a higher mandatory minimum, as it should create a better understanding of how these cases should be sentenced.

Conversely, these measures will also help where a victim kills their partner after being subjected to coercive control throughout the course of a relationship. Coercive and controlling behaviour is an insidious form of abuse, used by perpetrators to emotionally terrorise and intimidate their partners and assert continued dominance over a victim. A 2014 study by Solace Women's Aid found that 95 out of 100 domestic abuse survivors they interviewed had experienced coercive control, either in conjunction with physical abuse or on its own. Studies into the impact of coercive control on victims of domestic abuse have found that victims who experience this form of abuse may have stronger associations with complex post-traumatic stress disorder and more detrimental mental health outcomes compared to other forms of intimate partner violence due to the prolonged exposure to interpersonal trauma.⁸

The view that coercive control causes more extensive trauma than physical abuse has been echoed by victims and survivors who have contacted my office to share their experiences of abuse via correspondence and through roundtables. In roundtables I held with victims and survivors of domestic abuse in September 2021, a survivor said that whilst the physical pain of an assault would last for a day, she did not think she would ever be able to be relieved of the pain and trauma caused by the emotional abuse she experienced.⁹ However, this is not often understood in cases where victims go on to kill their partners, leading to concerning sentencing outcomes for victims of abuse. Through implementing measures which would lead to a wholesale improvement in understanding of coercive control, this would not only improve sentencing outcomes for perpetrators, but procedural justice for victims who kill their abusers.

I support the introduction of a statutory aggravating factor for controlling and coercive behaviour; I do not support a blanket increase in the sentencing starting point to 25 years. I reiterate the call for the implementation of a *specialist*

⁸ Lohmann, S., Cowlishaw, S., et. al. (2023) [The Trauma and Mental Health Impacts of Coercive Control: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis](#)

⁹ Domestic Abuse Commissioner (2023) [The Family Court and domestic abuse: achieving cultural change](#) p.20

consideration of domestic murders within the sentencing framework, over more rigid sentencing which does not get to the heart of the issues, as called on by the Sentencing Review.

If a minimum term starting point were to apply to cases of murder preceded by controlling or coercive behaviour against the murder victim:

Q1.2: What should the starting point be?

As indicated above:

I support the government addressing the disparities that schedule 21 has caused and will continue to cause. I strongly recommend that the Government implement the full suite of recommendations made in the Sentencing Review. This would increase sentences by introducing statutory aggravating factors for the following:

- murders at the end of a relationship;
- murders which take place following a history of coercive control;
- overkill; and
- murders by strangulation.

I also urge the government to design and deliver a programme of work to ensure CCB is understood, investigated and put before the court.

I strongly recommend the government consider implementing these alongside my full list of recommendations above.

Q1.3: Should this apply to all cases where there was controlling or coercive behaviour or only to those cases where the controlling or coercive behaviour was of a high level of seriousness?

If controlling and coercive behaviour was previously present and a murder has taken place, it must be considered serious. I recommend that a statutory aggravating factor of controlling and coercive behaviour should be introduced, rather than raising the minimum starting point. Alongside this, as set out above, training should be provided to judges to enhance understanding of domestic abuse, and the dynamics of controlling and coercive behaviour.

I would strongly recommend against any differentiation between controlling and coercive behaviour that is considered a 'high degree of seriousness' or a 'lower degree of seriousness'.

This is rarely appropriate and requires considerable and nuanced understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse and its intersection with a range of factors for

those individuals, which would be exceptionally difficult to do effectively within the criminal justice system. In the cases where a murder has taken place, I would strongly advise against any so-called differentiation.

Q2.1: Should a minimum term starting point, above the baseline starting point of 15- years, apply to all murders committed with a knife or other weapon or not?

The disparity between sentences for murders committed with a knife in the home and outside the home is an injustice that must be amended. Lawmakers previously raising thresholds for other types of murders did not consider the implications for domestic homicides committed in the home. Government must therefore address the issues created by Schedule 21, as well as implementing Clare Wade KC's full suite of recommendations.

Whilst I agree that starting points for murder with a knife or weapon outside the home needs addressing, I have 3 main issues with the government's current proposal:

- o The proposal is founded on the disparity created by the introduction of a 25-year minimum starting point for murders where a knife has been brought to the scene. However, introduction of this would create further disparity between murders committed with knives compared to other methods, such as strangulation. The latest ONS data shows that over 1 in 8 (13%) of female victims of domestic homicide were killed by 'strangulation, asphyxiation'¹⁰
 - o Changes in thresholds based on individual campaigns over the years have created discrepancies which have led to clear injustice; the most shocking examples of these are in relation to domestic homicide.
 - o We see examples of much lower sentences for domestic homicide as compared to murders of a similar nature committed in public or outside of the home.
- o Evidence shows that domestic homicides committed by domestic abusers are often pre-planned and pre-meditated¹¹. If this legislation is introduced, it is likely that perpetrators will plan to carry out their murders using other forms of killing which do not carry higher sentencing tariffs, such as strangulation. Would this inherently reduce domestic homicide, or even out the disparity between domestic homicide sentences after the introduction of paragraph 5A of Schedule 21 to the Criminal Justice Act 2003?
- o This will disproportionately affect victims of abuse who kill their abusers.

¹⁰ [Homicide in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

¹¹ [A Comparison of Domestic and Non-Domestic Homicides: Further Evidence for Distinct Dynamics and Heterogeneity of Domestic Homicide Perpetrators | Journal of Family Violence \(springer.com\)](https://www.springer.com)

¹² [Understanding Domestic Homicide - Neil Websdale \(1999\)](#)

Impact on women who kill

Clare Wade KC was clear in her review that the use of weapons is a gendered issue¹³. Women who kill their abusers are likely to use a weapon because of disparities in size and strength and knowledge of the violence their abusers are capable of¹⁴. To make an automatic starting point to directly relate to the 25-year minimum term starting point for bring a knife to the scene will significantly and disproportionately impact women who kill their partners following sustained experiences of abuse.

According to the Centre for Women's Justice's (the "CWJ") *Women Who Kill* report, there appears to be very little assessment of how sentencing in cases of murder and manslaughter may disadvantage women. For example, the use of weapons is an aggravating factor in determining the sentence, and this research found that in 79% (n=73) of cases, women had used a weapon to kill their partner. This is unsurprising, given women's relative size and physical strength, and, in cases of abuse, their knowledge of their partner's capacity to be violent. In contrast, the second most common form of femicide is strangulation – a method almost never used by women who kill their male partners.¹⁵

Femicide research highlights that women are being given disproportionately harsher sentences than men in relation to domestic homicides, and evidence suggests that it can also be more challenging to overturn unsafe convictions or unfair sentences¹⁶¹⁷. Women can be 3 times as likely as men to be arrested when they are construed as the perpetrator of intimate partner violence¹⁸. These disparities create a disadvantage for women in the criminal justice system that would only be further exacerbated by the government's proposal. Furthermore, a popular conceptualisation of the belief that men can use violence to express love can be seen in 'crimes of passion' or the defence of *crime passionnel*¹⁹. Men are afforded more sympathy in this respect in terms of sentencing and prosecution.²⁰

¹³ [Multivariate Dimensions of Age, Gender, and Weapon Use in Spousal Homicides: Victims & Offenders: Vol 8 , No 3 – Get Access \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

¹⁴ [CWJ Response To Government On Domestic Homicide Review: Cherry Picking Recommendations Will Have Unintended Consequences For Victims Of Domestic Abuse](#)

¹⁵ The Femicide Census found that, of the 1,425 cases 47% of women were killed using sharp instruments, 20% were strangled, 16% were killed using a blunt instrument, and 15% were killed by kicking/stamping/hitting.

¹⁶ [Narratives of Intimate Partner Femicide with Love | SpringerLink](#)

¹⁷ [Righting Wrongs: What are the barriers faced by women seeking to overturn unsafe convictions or unfair sentences in the Court of Appeal \(Criminal Division\)? | The Griffins Society](#)

¹⁸ [Portrayal of Women as Intimate Partner Domestic Violence Perpetrators – Marianne Hester, 2012 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

¹⁹ [Jealous Men but Evil Women: The Double Standard in Cases of Domestic Homicide in: Perceiving Evil: Evil Women and the Feminine \(brill.com\)](#)

²⁰ [Narratives of Intimate Partner Femicide with Love | SpringerLink](#)

Coercive and controlling behaviour is complex and can be difficult to explain and prove to juries. As well, there is no set direction which judges give in summing up to assist them with understanding. This makes it incredibly hard for victims who use their experience of domestic abuse to make a case for manslaughter using one of the partial defences to murder where they have killed their partners and may result in inadvertent miscarriages of justice, which are difficult to overturn. Less than 24% of domestic abuse crimes are reported to the police, which further makes it more difficult for victims to show a course of abuse over many years.²¹ Therefore, even though manslaughter should be used in cases where victims of abuse kill their abusers, this is so difficult to prove that often in court juries may find someone guilty of murder. Increasing sentencing automatically where a knife has been used is likely to disproportionately affect women who kill their abusers at home.

The *'Women Who Kill'* report from the CWJ, together with other existing research,²²³²⁴ shows that the vast majority of women who kill their partners do so after having been abused by the men they kill. However, where CCB is being poorly picked up or understood, it is hard to build a positive case for the partial defences which would result in them receiving a lower sentence²⁵.

Extreme violence and overkill

As highlighted in the Sentencing Review, gratuitous overkill by perpetrators is more of a concern than use of a weapon per se. This is a significant issue that needs to be better reflected in sentences handed down for domestic homicides.

There is evidence that women who use weapons following abuse tend to inflict minimal wounds when compared to men who kill, where extreme violence and overkill can be a feature²⁶.

As recommended by Clare Wade KC, I strongly recommend the introduction of a statutory aggravating factor in cases of extreme violence or overkill, in recognition of the harm caused.

If the government introduce statutory aggravation for overkill, this will also help to address disparities in sentences where a murder took place in the home, and thus received a lower minimum sentence, but was extremely violent.

Pre-meditation of homicides, and disparities between sentences

²¹ Barrow-Grint, K., Sebire, J., et al (2023) *Policing Domestic Abuse: Risk, Policy and Practice*, Routledge, 106

²² [Portrayal of Women as Intimate Partner Domestic Violence Perpetrators - Marianne Hester, 2012 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

²³ [Understanding Domestic Homicide - Neil Websdale \(1999\)](#)

²⁴ [Advance-A-place-to-go-like-this-Full-Report-and-Appendix-Web.pdf \(advancecharity.org.uk\)](#)

²⁵ [Arresting Developments: Trends in Female Arrests for Domestic Violence and Proposed Explanations](#)

²⁶ [\(PDF\) Who Does What to Whom? Gender and Domestic Violence Perpetrators \(researchgate.net\)](#)

Domestic homicides are often pre-planned and pre-meditated²⁷²⁸. 83% of cases studied in an examination of domestic homicides showed elements of planning. Perpetrators have been shown to be forensically aware enough to make choices during their planning to reduce their sentences²⁹³⁰³¹.

Under the government's proposal to create a higher minimum starting sentence for murders using a weapon, it is possible that perpetrators of domestic homicide will instead plan and carry out murders using alternative methods such as through strangulation. I would be concerned to see a sentencing regime that does not recognise the harm caused by all domestic homicides, including murder by strangulation. This is not to dismiss the differences in sentences that should come where the murder is one of extreme violence, or where there is a history of controlling and coercive behaviour.

It is instead to recognise that under these proposals there would still be a disparity for families bereaved by domestic homicide depending on the method of killing alone, without wider consideration of the levels of violence or controlling and coercive behaviour that preceded it. More research is needed to understand pre-meditation for domestic homicides, and how it is treated in law. I therefore do not agree with the government's proposal.

If a minimum term starting point were to apply to all murders committed with a knife or other weapon...

Q2.2 What should the starting point be?

As indicated above:

I support the government addressing the disparities that schedule 21 has caused and will continue to cause. I strongly recommend that the Government implement the full suite of recommendations made in the Sentencing Review. This would increase sentences by introducing statutory aggravating factors for the following:

- murders at the end of a relationship;
- murders which take place following a history of coercive control;
- overkill; and
- murders by strangulation.

²⁷ [A Comparison of Domestic and Non-Domestic Homicides: Further Evidence for Distinct Dynamics and Heterogeneity of Domestic Homicide Perpetrators | Journal of Family Violence \(springer.com\)](#)

²⁸ [Understanding Domestic Homicide – Neil Websdale \(1999\)](#)

²⁹ [e-space \(mmu.ac.uk\)](#)

³⁰ [Homicide and Organized Crime in England – Matt Hopkins, Nick Tilley, Kate Gibson, 2013 \(sagepub.com\)](#)

³¹ [Domestic Homicide: Neuropsychological Profiles of Murderers Who Kill Family Members and Intimate Partners – Hanlon – 2016 – Journal of Forensic Sciences – Wiley Online Library](#)

I also strongly urge the government to design and deliver a programme of work to ensure CCB is understood, investigated and put before the court.

I strongly recommend the government consider implementing these alongside my full list of recommendations above.

Q2.3 Should this be disapplied in cases where a victim of abuse has killed their abuser or not?

In general, a strong and nuanced understanding of domestic abuse should be factored into any sentences for a victim of abuse who kills their abuser.

However, as set out earlier in this consultation response, there are significant issues in practice with domestic abuse and controlling and coercive behaviour being recognised in sentencing in these circumstances. Please see the sections above on *Women who Kill, Extreme Violence and Overkill, and Premeditation*.

Case study – Alison

This case study, of Alison, which is a pseudonym, was provided by her family and powerfully illustrates the problems with the current regime for domestic homicide sentencing. It shows the disparity between domestic homicide sentences depending on the circumstances of the murder, a poor recognition of overkill, and a lack of consideration of domestic abuse and controlling and coercive behaviour. Please be advised that this contains details of violence.

Alison, aged 56, lived in the north of England and was a Mum of 3 adult children and had 1 grandchild. Alison owned her own home, worked full time and was the main breadwinner. She was married to her husband for 30 years and throughout her marriage experienced a cycle of domestic abuse through subtle patterns of coercive control over many years. Alison's husband would isolate her from family and friends, monitored her activity, time and online communication, over the years became jealous and treated Alison as his possession and would use techniques such as gaslighting and manipulation.

In the autumn of 2020, Alison decided to end her marriage to her husband however due to Covid-19 restrictions and lockdown measures in place, her options to at the time were limited. Alison's job meant she classed as a key worker during the pandemic and continued to work however her husband's job was furloughed. When Alison made the decision to end their relationship, she experienced an escalation in abuse. Alison's husband increased the level of his control tactics by stalking her outside of work and during walks, he started to threaten suicide and would seek attention by smashing up items in their home – all behaviours during this post separation period he had not displayed before.

In November, Alison's daughter in law received a diagnosis of stage 4 bowel cancer. Alison's Son and Daughter in law were in her 'covid bubble' and visited them and her then 11month old grandson. Alison offered to move into their house to help with childcare and support her daughter in law with her upcoming cancer treatment. Alison returned home that evening and informed her husband of her intentions to move out of their home and packed her things together to leave. It was this evening Alison was killed by her husband; she was stabbed over 300 times in her own home as she was getting her coat to leave.

Alison's husband used 4 knives to inflict over 300 wounds to her body. He particularly focused on her face with over 100 wounds on this part of her body. Her husband repeatedly went into the kitchen to get another weapon and used extreme methods of overkill to ensure Alison was dead and that she could never leave; this was his final act of control over their marriage.

Alison's husband was arrested and during his time before court sentencing, her family and friends provided Police with interviews and evidence which highlighted the various forms of domestic abuse she experienced both during her marriage and post separation.

Two months after Alison was killed, her family and the Police met with two professionals from the CPS to discuss the case, court process and sentencing. During this meeting, the CPS were solely focused on obtaining a charge for murder. When Alison's family highlighted the evidence provided of domestic abuse, the professional from the CPS stated "nothing prior to Alison's death is relevant to the CPS and the domestic abuse Alison was subject to is not in public interest to press further charges." Whilst in prison, Alison's husband subjected her daughter to stalking via a released inmate and malicious communications via 9 letters even when a MG6 no contact order was in place. The CPS stated that this is not enough evidence to charge him with any additional offences.

Alison's husband attended court in April 2021, he pled guilty to murder and he received a sentence of 18 years. The family enquired with the Police about the sentence as they believed this did not reflect the severity of both the overkill and the domestic abuse that Alison had experienced over many years. Her family were informed that the judge had likely taken the perpetrators age into account (he was 60 at the time of the incident) and the family were told 'he is old therefore he is likely to die in prison before he reaches the end of the sentence.' In addition, family were told by Police, "if Alison had made it out of the house on the evening she attempted to leave, if her husband had exited the house with a knife and killed her, that his sentence would have been higher as he would've evidenced his intent to kill."