

PRESS RELEASE

1 February 2019

Inquest into the death of Donna Williamson, victim of domestic homicide opens on Monday 4 February 2019

**Before Senior Coroner Andrew Harris
Inner South London Coroner's Court
1 Tennis Street, London SE1 1YD
Listed for 10 days**

Donna Williamson died on 12 August 2016 aged 44 years old as a result of multiple stab wounds inflicted upon her by her former partner Kevin O'Regan, who is now serving a life sentence for murder.

Donna's death followed a sustained and escalating pattern of domestic abuse which had come to the frequent attention of the police from 2009.

On 4 May 2016 Kevin O'Regan had been arrested and was subsequently charged with assault upon Ms Williamson and assault upon three police officers. He was bailed awaiting trial with conditions not to contact Donna Williamson or enter the London Borough of Lewisham. However, on 6 August 2016 Kevin O'Regan went to Ms Williamson's flat in the London Borough of Lewisham and threatened her with a knife. Ms Williamson called the police and Kevin O'Regan was arrested for breach of bail, but no other offences. He appeared in court on Monday 8 August 2016 but was simply released with the same bail conditions.

On 12 August 2016 Kevin O'Regan was stopped by police a few roads away from Donna's house. A PNC check was requested over police radio. Despite there being markers on the PNC that there were bail conditions preventing him from entering Lewisham or contacting Donna Williamson, the officers were informed that Kevin O'Regan was free to go. Approximately 30 minutes later Kevin O'Regan murdered Donna Williamson at her flat.

An inquest has been resumed to address the following issues:

1. The police response to Ms Williamson's allegations of violence and coercive behaviour;
2. The risk assessments performed and whether Ms Williamson was recognised to be at risk of being fatally injured;
3. Whether there was sufficient appropriate information available to inform charging and prosecution decisions;
4. Whether there was sufficient appropriate information brought to the bail hearings;
5. Whether the bail conditions were appropriately monitored and enforced;
6. Whether there were any failures in Multi Agency Risk Assessment procedures;
7. Whether appropriate action was taken to ensure security of Ms Williamson when her door was broken down;
8. The adequacy of the police response on 12 August 2016;

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9. Whether there is evidence that absent procedural and informational failures, the death would probably have been prevented;
10. Whether any training deficits on responding to domestic violence contributed to the death.

Donna's mother Susan Williamson said:

"Donna was brutally murdered in August 2016. Thoughts of her are in our heads from the moment we get up until we go to bed. The horror of sitting in court listening to the recording of Donna dying will stay with us all forever. Nothing can bring Donna back, but we can only hope that lessons can be learned from her death so that other families do not have to suffer as we have".

Sophie Naftalin, solicitor for the family said:

"Donna's case raises many of the issues that we hear again and again in cases of domestic homicide. Two women a week are killed by their partners in this country alone. This inquest is an opportunity for the Metropolitan Police to review their policies on domestic violence and take stock of whether there is more that they could be doing to protect women".

NOTES TO EDITORS

For further information please contact Sophie Naftalin at Bhatt Murphy on 020 7729 1115 or s.naftalin@bhattmurphy.co.uk

Donna Williamson's family are represented by Sophie Naftalin of Bhatt Murphy and Alison Gerry of Doughty Street Chambers. They have also received support from Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Assault (AAFDA).