

Tragic Melksham Killing Sparks Mental Health Review

An in-depth review has started into the circumstances surrounding the killing of a Melksham woman by her mentally-ill husband.



Richard Newton killed his wife Suzanne at their home on Barnes Wallis Close last January, after suffering paranoid delusions.

He pleaded guilty to her manslaughter in February on the grounds of diminished responsibility and was sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

The former Hills Waste employee had suffered severe paranoia since a horse riding accident in 2006, and had previously taken his wife hostage at gunpoint, leaving her fearing for her safety.



He had been discharged into the community from secure mental health facilities twice.

West Wiltshire M.P. Andrew Murrison raised the case with Norman Lamb M.P., the minister responsible for mental health services, who confirmed a domestic homicide review had been commissioned by Wiltshire Council, involving the Avon and Wiltshire NHS Mental Health Partnership Trust, the police and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

In a letter to Dr. Murrison the minister said: "I was very sorry to read of Mrs. Newton's death and I appreciate the concerns you raise.

"In the Trust's internal management review of Mrs. Newton's death, it recognised that it now does much more to facilitate re-entry to services for patients should the need arise than it did at the time of Mr. Newton's discharge.

"The Trust has stated that it is committed to learning all possible lessons from this tragedy and will also fully implement any recommendations arising from the domestic homicide review once it is published."

Dr. Murrison said: "I think Norman Lamb has identified an extremely difficult area where there are no simple answers.

"I wouldn't want to make any comment on the specific case, but it is important that people who have serious mental health issues have access to serious intervention."

"I have been involved locally and nationally with mental health issues.

"It's an area that has historically been overlooked, but it is being given a priority now that it previously didn't enjoy."

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