**Cases of Filicide-Suicide – background information**

The research literature has not agreed a definition of filicide-suicide but it usually a biological parent killing a child or children and then attempting to kill themselves.

An exploration of the research studies around the world into parents killing their children and in particular filicide combined with suicide reveal some common themes:

* Fathers are more likely to kill an older child and then commit suicide
* A history of domestic abuse including controlling behaviour
* Times of separation after a relationship breakdown are high risk
* Contact arrangement disputes are high risk
* The presence of mental health problems, particularly depression is high risk
* The presence of alcohol misuse is a high risk.

In the study “Twenty nine child homicides” by Hilary Saunders (2004) the following finding are particularly relevant:

* Several homicides occurred during overnight stays
* Mental health issues are mentioned with regard to 9 of the 13 fathers who killed their children
* In several cases where statutory agencies knew that the mother was experiencing domestic abuse, the children were not viewed as being at risk of significant harm, even when mother facing potentially lethal violence.
* In five cases it is clear the father killed the children in revenge for the partner leaving him
* Some professionals clearly did not have any understanding of the power and control dynamics of domestic abuse and did not recognise the increased risk following separation
* In several cases the professionals did not talk to the children, meaning there was not assessment of needs.

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