



PLANS George Osborne

Osborne told to back off pensions

George Osborne has been urged to give savers a guarantee there will be no changes to pensions tax relief until at least 2020.

The Chancellor shelved plans for a raid on tax relief in this month's Budget following stark warnings from experts and resistance from Tory MPs.

But analysts fear Osborne will revisit the plans. And former pensions minister Steve Webb urged him to wait at least four years before doing so.

The Lib Dem, now director of policy for Royal London, said: "My plea to the Chancellor would be, on Budget day, tell us you are leaving it at least for a parliament so people can plan for the long term."

Osborne had been considering plans to make pensions more like Isas in the Budget on March 16, which would have removed the upfront tax relief on contributions and reduced the incentive to save.

A Treasury source confirmed Osborne had ditched the idea of making changes because he had "always been clear he would not do anything to damage saving".

£80k bus bonus win

Directors who sparked a boardroom battle at one of Scotland's biggest bus firms are to be given bonuses of £80,000.

Lothian Buses finance director Norman Strachan and engineering boss Bill Devlin took Edinburgh Council to a tribunal after being told the bonuses wouldn't be paid.

The bus company held back the payments after the pair criticised managing director Ian Craig over his management style.

Devlin and Strachan, along with a third director, launched a grievance procedure that led to the resignation of Craig and chairwoman Anne Faulds.

Lothian Buses chairman Jim McFarlane said: "The directors have been paid in line with their contracts."

REVEALED HOW OFFICERS IGNORED WARNINGS WHY DIDN'T

Witness to fatal fracas sues police for not averting it

Marion Scott

The police failures that led to a man being stabbed to death can be laid bare for the first time.

Officers did not take Iain O'Brien's threats of violence against his ex seriously and failed to trigger domestic abuse procedures that would have prevented him bursting into her home with a baseball bat.

He was stabbed to death by Lynn McMillan's boyfriend Paul Hadden during the fracas in her home in Coatbridge.

Lynn, 42, has now launched a £300,000 legal action against Police Scotland over the trauma she suffered as a result of their failures.

Police have since apologised to her for not detaining O'Brien, having been called to an incident at the house earlier the same day.

A report by the former Strathclyde Police's Professional Standards Unit admitted officers failed to log previous incidents, pass on information or carry out background checks.

Former care worker Lynn said: "When I called police earlier that day, two officers heard O'Brien saying: 'You are a whore and I'm coming to kill you.'"

"They saw I was terrified and promised to protect me."

"Instead, they left me at my home and delayed going to Iain's so they missed him."

"Iain did what he'd threatened to do and smashed his way into my house. We were trapped in my tiny kitchen with no escape. Paul's natural reaction was to save my life."

"None of this would have happened if police had done what they were supposed to. I feel terrible for Iain's family. Paul has been sent to jail and I'm in constant pain from the injuries I suffered and have night terrors and flashbacks."

O'Brien, 39, entered terrified Lynn's home on January 31, 2012, and was stabbed 21 times by Lynn's long-term partner Paul, 36, as he tried to protect her.

Paul's 10-year sentence for culpable homicide was reduced to seven on appeal in 2013 when judges agreed his fear of injury hadn't been fully recognised.

Police had been called to the house earlier on the day of O'Brien's death when Lynn reported a threat from him.

The Professional Standards Unit report said that while police had managed incidents in a manner which controlled the escalation of



HORRIFIC Helen's face is badly beaten after brute Feek battered her unconscious



TRAUMA Lynn is suing police force



HORROR Paul Hadden, far left, stabbed O'Brien to death after he launched baseball bat attack

O'Brien's behaviour, they could have prevented him going to Lynn's home that night.

Lynn's legal action, which claims police failed to act on the "real and immediate risk" to her life, has been lodged in the Court of Session.

She is claiming damages for loss of earnings, psychological and physical injuries and legal costs and interest dating back to 2012.

Lynn and O'Brien dated briefly when she split from Paul but the pair had reunited.

On January 29, O'Brien sent threatening texts but instead of arresting him for sending those, police detained him for shouting sectarian abuse at them. He pled guilty, was fined and released next day.

Officers reported the incidents to the

OF VIOLENCE AND MISSED CHANCE TO SAVE A LIFE

COPS LISTEN?

He had a huge mental hold on me. He set traps for me. I was his slave

■ **Lesley Roberts**

Thug Lawrence Feek unleashed such violence on his partner that he left the imprint of his shoe on her head.

At their farmhouse on Shetland, Helen was beaten unconscious with a PlayStation console while her 12-year-old son tried to protect her.

But Feek, who pled guilty to the assault, walked out of court with a £1700 fine, spared a jail term by a sheriff who said he didn't want to cause further "inconvenience" to the young boy.

She said: "Basically, he got no punishment at all. A slap on the wrist. I was absolutely gutted and felt very let down.

"I thought he was going to prison. He thought he was going to prison. I honestly believe if they hadn't let him out, I wouldn't have gone back to him.

"He wrote to me full of apologies and promising to get help and he called me as soon as they let him go. It was all so fresh and I still loved him. It's very hard to explain.

"So he asked me to pick him up and I said yes. I thought he would change even though there was no reason to believe him. And he didn't change."

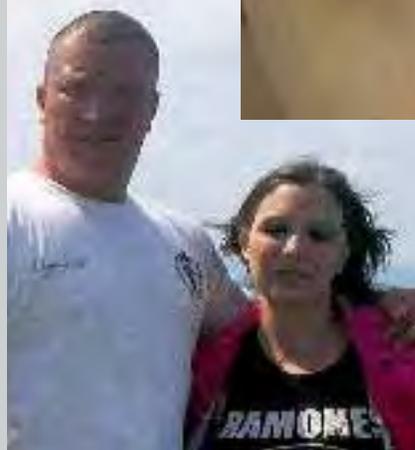
The story of the next terrifying year of Helen's life forms part of a powerful new BBC documentary – *Behind Closed Doors* – with footage straight from the frontline of domestic abuse investigations.

Three women waive their right to anonymity to expose the hidden and complicated experience of dealing with an abusive partner.

Film-makers followed Helen after she fled to the south of England, trying to break free from the relationship, all the while wrestling with the love she still felt for her abuser.

Given unprecedented access by Thames Valley police, the team were able to record the complex emotions she felt while Feek bombarded her with horrifying threats via phone calls and text messages.

Helen, 37, said: "He would leave the most vile messages, they play some on the programme.



BRUTAL Feek's footprint can be seen on Helen's cheek after the beating. The couple together, left

The police were with me one night when he left 62 voicemail messages.

"I had to get clean away from him otherwise he would have constantly been there. He had a huge mental hold on me, I can see that now.

"He had become more and more demanding over

time. He liked to have his feet rubbed and at first that wasn't a chore but eventually he would just demand that I did it. I had to do it when he told me to.

"I'd have to do everything. I was like a slave. I would have to clean the house perfectly, no smears on the windows or mirrors, all the cans in the cupboard neatly lined up – like in the film *Sleeping With the Enemy*.

"He'd set traps for me – hiding little pieces of paper around the house to make sure I'd cleaned properly. He'd put them behind the TV or under furniture or behind pictures and if I missed one there would be hell to pay. But it

was really difficult because the love doesn't go away immediately. It takes time."

Helen and Feek, 40, a fish farmer, had been together for nearly 10 years when his controlling and undermining behaviour escalated to terrible violence.

Even after Feek beat her up in Shetland, Helen was so cowed that she returned to their cottage to clean and tidy up before rushing to catch the ferry off the island.

It's almost a year since Helen agreed to allow her torment to be filmed and as she watched the footage she can barely believe she's looking at herself.

She hasn't seen Feek for months and he is bound by the terms of a court non-molestation order.

Helen added: "When I was asked if I wanted to do this I spoke to my son and he said: 'If you can stop this happening to one person or you can let some mother see what it's like for their child then it's a really good thing to do.'

"He was absolutely right because I never envisaged myself being the person you see in that film. Never ever in a million years.

"I was a bubbly person before, I was strong, so for Lawrence to be able to manipulate me is quite an eye-opener. Eventually I wouldn't say boo to a goose."

Helen's story is one of three featured in the documentary and some of the footage is so harrowing that it could only be screened after the watershed.

Award-winning film-maker Anna Hall, from Dunblane, was on the scene when officers arrived at a flat where a victim was still being attacked.

Anna said: "The women have all been so brave in allowing us to film them and it's an honest film, it doesn't hold back.

"All the cases show it's not just about the physical attacks. I hope it shows people the psychological and emotional coercion involved in domestic abuse.

"It can take an awful long time to extract yourself psychologically from something like that and we should really be more sympathetic.

"It's not as simple as saying: 'why don't you just leave?'"

"I also hope we're able to reach people who're in abusive relationships, even if without violence. I think some people will watch this film and think: 'Bloody hell, that's me' and seek some help."

Behind Closed Doors, Monday, March 14, BBC1, 9pm

procurator fiscal but failed to submit forms to obtain call data from O'Brien's phone, meaning there wasn't enough evidence to charge him with domestic abuse.

At 3.19pm on January 31, Lynn reported further threats from him. Officers went to Lynn's home and then to O'Brien's home but he wasn't there and they left.

The officers were informed O'Brien had been arrested two days earlier but weren't told it was for a domestic incident.

If they had, O'Brien could have been pursued under stalking laws and officers would have been required to arrest him.

The report adds: "In this circumstance he clearly would not have been able to pursue the

course of conduct that he subsequently did on January 31."

Just after 8pm that night, O'Brien made two drunken malicious calls to police alleging he'd been threatened by someone with a gun. Two officers found him intoxicated.

They then went to Lynn's house where she explained she'd earlier reported O'Brien for threatening her. It was not logged as a domestic incident, despite the sergeant knowing of the previous issues.

Just 20 minutes after officers left Lynn's home, O'Brien threatened her again and she dialled 999. Responding officers heard O'Brien threatening to kill her.

Lynn said: "The officers told me: 'We've got

“They delayed and it changed all of our lives forever”

him now.' They promised to protect me, but they left, leaving Paul and I at my house.

"It should've taken seven minutes for officers to get to Iain's house. But they delayed and missed him and he turned up here, changing all of our lives forever."

Lynn's lawyer Cameron Fyfe of Drummond Miller said: "This case is unusual because police made a specific promise to protect Lynn from a threat and then failed to do so."

A Police Scotland spokesman said: "A full and thorough review of this case has been carried out. The force have identified particular areas for improvement.

"Appropriate action has been taken and our procedures have been amended accordingly."

Expert
Better but could be better still

Campaigners yesterday warned domestic abuse victims are still being failed by gaps in Scotland's justice system.

Scottish Women's Aid's chief executive Marsha Scott, below, said Helen's ordeal highlighted specific problems with soft sentencing.

She said: "In this case, can you imagine if a man had done that to another man, to a stranger or his boss or his brother? Do you think the result would have been the same? Of course it wouldn't."

"The most common disposals in court cases where there's a guilty conviction are just shocking.

"They're fines, they're community payback orders and occasionally

they're admonishments.

"This is an extraordinary reflection of how some sheriffs just don't treat violence and abuse of women seriously. It's like somehow they're not humans if they're abused by their partner."

Marsha said that all services involved in domestic abuse cases need to improve if the outcomes for women are to get better.

She said: "We have come a great distance in the past six years. Policing is hugely improved, as is prosecution, but while they're much better, I would have to say it's still not good enough."

Referring to Helen's case on Shetland, Marsha said that although provision of support services in remote areas may be more difficult, it should be addressed through investment and new techniques.

She said: "Domestic abuse is not restricted by geography, economic circumstances or ethnicity. I haven't yet seen the programme in which Helen features but I hope it helps people see domestic abuse is a pattern of behaviour."

