

Corporate Management Team

18 January 2012

Domestic Homicide Reviews



**Report of Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director for Adults,
Wellbeing and Health**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To advise Corporate Management Team of emerging issues in relation to conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews and propose options for the co-ordination of these reviews at a regional level.

Background

- 2 In April 2011 the Government issued multi-agency statutory guidance in relation to the conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR's). The guidance located responsibility for such reviews firmly with Community Safety Partnerships and not specifically with Local Authorities. The Chair of the CSP holds responsibility for establishing whether a homicide is to be subject of a DHR.
- 3 The guidance contained no financial provision for supporting DHR's. The processes identified were modelled on Serious Case Reviews (SCR).
- 4 The purpose of a Domestic Homicide Review is to:
 - a. Establish any lessons to be learned from the domestic homicide regarding the way in which local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims;
 - b. Identify clearly what those lessons are both within and between agencies, how and within what timescales they will be acted on, and what is expected to change as a result;
 - c. Apply these lessons to service responses including changes to policies and procedures as appropriate; and
 - d. Prevent domestic violence homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence victims and their children through improved intra and inter-agency working.

Current Position

- 5 The number of domestic homicides in the North East region is comparatively low and numbers are decreasing. In 2009/10 there were seven domestic

homicides in the region with two of these occurring in the Durham Constabulary area. A further two domestic homicides were committed in the region in 2010/11 and both occurred within the Durham Constabulary area.

- 6 In 2011 there was one domestic homicide in County Durham. Following the government guidance issued in April 2011 the Safe Durham Partnership asked the Director of Public Protection for Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust to chair the review
- 7 The current review has highlighted resource and capacity issues for the Chair which would be exacerbated should incidents increase. The SDP are now proposing that collaborative working across the region should be explored to determine if economies of scale can be achieved. This needs to address the capacity required to undertake a review as and when required. Other Community Safety Partnerships across the region could also learn from the local experience in County Durham and vice versa.
- 8 The SDP propose two options for consideration by the Association of North East Councils (ANEC):
 - a. That regional Local Authorities create an annual rota for hosting DHR's. The hosting authority would receive support from a pooled budget to offset the administrative costs incurred. Contributions to the support budget would be pro rata to population and be unlikely to exceed £5,000 per annum for any Authority.

This option would enable authorities to plan in advance for the potential capacity implications of holding the Chair while knowing that in other years the only implication will be a financial commitment to the regional scheme. The financial commitment could produce net savings or additional costs compared to the current arrangements for each authority depending on where the Homicide(s) occur. The implications attached to holding a DHR include:

- Time for the Chair
- Admin time to support the actual review meetings and preparation etc.
- Admin time within agencies preparing for the review
- Time within agencies for signing off the reviews
- Time for agencies involved as members of a DHR panel.

The above will include direct and indirect costs that individual areas will incur regardless of whether they hold the Chair or not e.g. agencies involved as members of a DHR panel. Pooling the risk should mean that the costs for an individual LA would be reduced if they need a review.

- b. A pairing arrangement with similar sized areas. This option would work in a similar way to the above but would simplify the process of securing regional commitment: individual areas could seek their own reciprocal arrangements with one another.

Recommendations and reasons

- 9 Corporate Management Team are recommended to:
- a. Consider the options proposed in this paper; and
 - b. Consider forwarding this proposal to the next meeting of the ANEC Chief Executives group.

Background papers

Home Office (2011) *Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews*.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/DHR-guidance?view=Binary>

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – The financial implications of chairing a Domestic Homicide Review will be reviewed by the Safe Durham Partnership.

Staffing – The staffing implications of chairing a Domestic Homicide Review will be considered as part of the review by the Safe Durham Partnership.

Risk – No risk implications.

Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty – The majority of victims of domestic homicides are women. Learning lessons from Domestic Homicide Reviews will improve services to all victims and children who experience and witness domestic abuse and would contribute to increasing their safety.

Accommodation – No implications.

Crime and Disorder – Main focus of the report.

Human Rights – No implications.

Consultation – No implications.

Procurement – No implications.

Disability Issues – No implications.

Legal implications – Overall responsibility for establishing a review rests with the Safe Durham Partnership. The local authority has a duty to establish or participate in a review.