

SAFER LEEDS & Leeds LSCB

The Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 With effect from 13th April 2011, Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004) established Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) on a statutory basis under the responsibility of local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP).
- 1.2 For the purposes of this legislation, a 'domestic homicide review' means the review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence abuse or neglect by-
 - a) A person to whom he/she was related or with whom he/she was or had been in an intimate relationship (regardless of gender or sexuality), or
 - b) A member of the same household as him/her self,
- 1.3 For the purposes of this legislation deaths resulting from 'Honour'– Based Violence will also be included within DHR's.
- 1.4 Should a death within the remit of paragraph 1.2 above occur, the Chair of the local CDRP can require a broad range of statutory and voluntary agencies that have had any involvement in the life of the deceased or alleged perpetrator to participate in a DHR.
- 1.5 **The Review is held with a view to identifying lessons to be learnt from the death not to identify or apportion blame or culpability.** The purpose of any DHR , similar to a Serious Case Review (SCR) authorised within Adult or Children's Safeguarding Boards is to improve services offered to vulnerable victims through inter and intra agency working and ensure agencies have sufficient and robust protocols and procedures in place to avoid any future reoccurrences.

2.0 Procedure for establishing and conducting a Domestic Homicide Review

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of the Police to inform the local CDRP, in writing, of the occurrence of a domestic homicide. The responsibility to establish a DHR then rests with the CDRP and to initiate a Review Panel drawn from a multi-agency background. The final decision whether to establish a DHR is the responsibility of the Chair of the CDRP by applying the definition set out in para. (1.2) above. Such decisions would normally be made after consultation

with local partners who have an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence.

- 2.2 It should be noted that in all cases when victims of domestic violence are aged between 16 and 18 years a child SCR will take precedence over a DHR.
- 2.3 The composition of the Review Panel will be based upon reference to any other ongoing reviews in relation to the deceased or his/her family such as Mental Health Investigation, Serious Case Review (SCR) both Adult or Child.
- 2.4 The Panel can either be constituted with a fixed membership or created on a bespoke basis having due regard to the circumstances surrounding that individual death and embracing the agencies involved prior to the incident occurring. Consideration should also be given to minority group representation as well as third sector involvement.
- 2.5 It will be recognised that a wealth of experience currently exists within Leeds with well established forums and procedures relating to Adult and Child Serious Case Reviews and representation or advice/support from these bodies should be encouraged.
- 2.6 The Review Panel should appoint an Independent Chair of the Panel who is responsible for managing and coordinating the review process and for producing the final Overview Report based upon the Individual Management Reviews (IMR) submitted by the various agencies having involvement with the deceased leading up to his/her death.
- 2.7 The Chair ideally should be an experienced and skilled individual (preferably in relation to domestic violence) who is not directly associated with any of the agencies involved in the Review. (*The Home Office Guidance document suggests consideration should be given to pooling such resources on a regional basis but practical experience from Adult Serious Case Reviews within Leeds has identified problems in following this option*). Guidance on Job Descriptions and Skills Specifications can be found on the Home Office website.
- 2.8 Options open to the CDRP in recruiting a Chair are:
 - a) to advertise externally using the Local Authority's procurement procedures and establish a small pool of qualified persons able to undertake the role of Chair, or
 - b) to identify a single, suitably qualified individual able to undertake all DHR's on behalf of Leeds when they occur, or
 - c) to identify a chair from another locality in the sub region/region not involved in the case and to offer that area a suitable individual from Leeds for a review in their area

- 2.9 It should be noted that as a result of the prominence given to Adult and Child Serious Case Reviews nationally, a pool of qualified 'experts' is emerging who are receiving remuneration at consultancy rates.
- 2.10 The scope of the Review will be determined by the Chair and the Review Panel prior to the commencement of the DHR taking all aspects of the facts already known into consideration. Issues such as family involvement and any legal sensitivities will be included in the early discussions.
- 2.11 The decision on whether or not to hold a DHR should be taken by the Chair of the CDRP within one month of the homicide coming to their attention and the Home Office notified accordingly. Similarly the Overview Report should be completed within six months of the commencement of the Domestic Homicide Review. However, it should be noted that ongoing investigations such as the criminal investigation, mental health or any legal review occurring parallel to the DHR could significantly affect the completion of the DHR within the timescales outlined in the Guidance document.
- 2.12 Taken the above issues into account, a scoping group will be convened for DHRs in Leeds as they arise.
- 2.13 If it becomes necessary to recruit and pay for an independent chair, the Executive will split the cost of this equally between the main named partners in the statutory guidance (who are all represented on the CDRP): Police, Local Authority, PCT, Probation. It is difficult to indicate in advance exactly how much this would be for each individual review. However, as a guide and based on recent independent chair costs for Serious Case Reviews and prevailing consultancy rates, it is suggested a figure of around £10,000 – £12,000 may be required. This would therefore require a contribution from each agency of approximately £2,500 – £3,000. Administrative support for the scoping group and review panel would come from existing resources in Safer Leeds to support each review.

3.0 Completion and submission of the Overview Report

- 3.1 The Overview Report should bring together and draw overall conclusions from the information and analysis contained in the IMR's and reports or information commissioned from any other relevant interests.
- 3.2 Findings of the Review should be regarded as '**Restricted**' until the document has been received and cleared by the Home Office Quality Assurance Group. The publication of the Overview Report will then be agreed by all parties on a set date with copies provided to senior management of all participating agencies in the Review.

3.3 Detailed guidance on supporting actions plans, electronic circulations and management issues of the IMR's can be found in the Guidance document.

Background Papers

Link to Home Office Statutory Guidance

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