



Home Office

30 JAN 2014

Norman Baker MP  
Minister for Crime Prevention

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Mr Jeff Harris  
Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Surrey  
PO Box 412  
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Reference: M14745/13

27 January 2014

Dear Mr Harris,

Thank you for your letter of 5 November 2013 to the Home Secretary outlining concerns about the costs and timescales involved in conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews. I am replying as the Minister with policy responsibility for the issues you have raised and I am sorry for the delay.

We believe that victims and their families deserve the best quality help, with the necessary processes in place to prevent any tragic events occurring. We recognise that local authorities have to make some tough spending decisions. However, it was our aim to ensure that protecting vulnerable people and victims of domestic violence, including potential future victims, was a priority in the Spending Review.

It is the responsibility of the individual local authority to identify any gaps in service provision for victims of domestic violence and put in place appropriate solutions to address this. We would expect local authorities to build services based on the needs of their communities, taking account of locally available information. This includes the funding of Domestic Homicide Reviews to learn local lessons, and take action to improve protection and provide the appropriate local support.

It is recognised that the needs of victims vary locally, and we believe that Police and Crime Commissioners are best placed to assess the needs of their communities and

ensure they receive the assistance they deserve. That is why the Government decided that funding for a range of local victims' services will be devolved to the democratically elected and accountable Police and Crime Commissioners.

Police and Crime Commissioners will be required to consult with their partners in setting the policing priorities in their local area. While commissioning for a range of victims' services will go to Police and Crime Commissioners, the Government will retain responsibility for commissioning services where there are either proven economies of scale, or they are genuinely specialist in nature.

The Domestic Homicide Reviews quality assurance process helps to ensure that all the local areas are conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews where required, in accordance with the statutory guidance. We are also keen to learn from those involved in the process of conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews, to improve the protection for victims and those who are vulnerable, and identify lessons of national importance from the reviews.

On 19 November we published the 'lessons learned' document setting out the most common themes that the Home Office Domestic Homicide Review Quality Assurance Panel have identified as emerging from the reports they have quality assured. The document also includes suggestions for work that can be undertaken locally, as well as national initiatives we are taking forward. The common themes identified are:

- awareness raising
- risk assessment
- information sharing
- multi-agency working
- approach to complex needs
- perpetrators and bail
- safeguarding the needs of children.

More on this can be found in the 'lessons learned' document which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-homicide-review-lessons-learned>.

Internal processes in the Home Office have also been strengthened to increase the frequency of the Quality Assurance Panel meetings, to better manage the volume of submissions we receive and ensure more timely feedback to the areas.

Additional links to the current timetable for the Quality Assurance Panel meetings, including timescales within which Community Safety Partnerships will receive feedback from the Panel, is now also on the Government website, and can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/groups/home-office-domestic-homicide-review-quality-assurance-panel>. You may also be interested to note that from 3 November all response letters to local areas from the Quality

Assurance Panel will be copied to their local Police and Crime Commissioner for information.

Other helpful links including: "Domestic Homicides: How to conduct a review" section of the Government website on domestic violence and abuse contains information and tools designed to assist those involved in the DHR process. Here is a link to the page: <https://www.gov.uk/domestic-violence-and-abuse>.

The recently issued Revised Statutory Guidance for Conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/revised-statutory-guidance-for-the-conduct-of-domestic-homicide-reviews>.

You may find that the criteria for assessing Domestic Homicide Reviews that we have published on the Government website will also be of assistance in conducting them in the future. It can be found at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/207602/criteria-DHR-web-v2.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207602/criteria-DHR-web-v2.pdf).

I hope this clarifies the Government's position and that you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely



**Norman Baker MP**  
**Minister of State**

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