

Domestic Homicide Review Quality Assurance Board Terms of Reference

1. Background

- 1.1. The Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process is underpinned by the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (“the Act”) which provides for local areas to carry out a DHR in instances where ‘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 was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or (b) a member of the same household as himself’. The DHR is held with the view of identifying lesson(s) learnt from the death. **[To be updated once new legislation is commenced]**
- 1.2. The expectation is that a DHR should be undertaken into every death that meets the circumstances above and where lessons can be learned. The Home Secretary can direct a specified body or person to establish and participate in DHRs (section 9(4) of the Act), where the Home Secretary considers they should be carried out.
- 1.3. The purpose of a DHR is to establish lessons learned regarding how local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims. The DHR process helps to improve the response to domestic abuse and prevent future homicides. The Chair of the DHR identifies actions and makes recommendations for statutory agencies and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) to implement improved practices.
- 1.4. Quality assurance for completed DHRs rests with the expert board made of statutory and voluntary sector agencies and is managed by the Home Office.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The purpose of the DHR Quality Assurance (QA) Board is to: ensure the DHR statutory guidance has been adhered to; that the DHR Chair has engaged appropriate agencies, organisations and family and friends to establish as full a picture as possible; and that learning has been identified and the likelihood of further domestic abuse related deaths are minimised.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1. The responsibilities of the QA Board are to:
 - Review all DHRs submitted by the Home Office. There is an expectation that a minimum of 16 DHRs will be reviewed each month. The Board may be required to review a higher number of cases when required and will need to manage their time according to the number of cases submitted each month.
 - Review all decisions made by CSPs not to commission DHRs (an average of 6 cases each month).
 - Provide feedback on DHRs to CSPs and the DHR Chair, which is informed by the DHR statutory guidance and own professional expertise, this will include

completion of a form covering: the way that the review has followed the statutory guidance; the analysis of domestic abuse within the review; and the effectiveness and suitability of the recommendations that have been identified from the analysis of this fatality to prevent further domestic abuse.

- Identify areas of good practice within DHRs and where a DHR might need to be amended prior to publication.
- Consider whether the recommendations made are SMART and outcome focussed to ensure that learning can be meaningfully embedded. The QA Board will also share any relevant feedback on recommendations with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) to inform the oversight mechanism. The DAC will also share any observations, learning or trends within recommendations from the oversight of implementation to ensure that this is considered in QA Board feedback.
- Share best practice and wider insight by publishing an annual report with data on DHRs reviewed and themes in QA Board feedback.

3.2. The QA Board's responsibilities extend to England and Wales only and is not expected to provide ministerial advice on DHR issues, conduct media interviews on DHRs following publication, or respond publicly on DHRs.

3.3. Report Writer

- One non-statutory member will have the additional task of the annual report writer for the Chair.
- The DHR annual report is expected to include data on DHRs reviewed and themes in feedback. It will be published online.

3.4. For QA Board members representing statutory organisations:

- Members will be required to review the DHRs being considered by the QA Board that cover their respective areas. Members will be required to review all decisions made by CSPs not to commission DHRs.

4. **Membership and expertise**

The Board members will consist of a mix of statutory and non-statutory members:

4.1. **Statutory members from:**

- a. NHS England
- b. Ministry of Justice

4.2. Members will need to demonstrate they have a minimum of 3 years' experience gained in the public sector and/or voluntary sector or academia by:

- a. working on domestic abuse or

- b. working on domestic homicide and/or suicide linked to domestic abuse

4.3. **Chair and Secretariat**

4.3.1. Chair

4.3.2. The Chair of the QA Board will be held by the Deputy Director of the Home Office Interpersonal Abuse Unit and can be deputised to a Home Office official as needed.

4.3.3. The Chair will be expected to provide direction in bringing members to a consensus publication of individual DHR reports or decisions being considered at any given QA Board meeting.

4.3.4. Secretariat

4.3.5. The role of Secretariat will be held by officials within the Home Office Interpersonal Abuse Unit. Their function is to support the Board in delivering its remit.

4.3.6. Tasks include, but are not limited to:

- a. Collating comments on DHRs from board members
- b. Communications to board members
- c. Efficient management of the overall DHR Quality Assurance process
- d. Organisation of board meetings

5. **Standards for Members & Governance of Board Business**

5.1. Members should at all times:

- a. Observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the advice they provide and the management of the Board;
- b. Be accountable to the Home Office for its activities and for the standard of advice and decisions it makes;
- c. Act in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies (June 2019) [Code of conduct for board members of public bodies - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) and the Seven Principles of Public Life: [The Seven Principles of Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk);
- d. Comply with this code and ensure they understand their duties, rights and
- e. responsibilities and that they are familiar with the function and role of this body and any relevant statements of Government policy;
- f. Not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations;
- g. Not hold any paid or high-profile unpaid posts in a political party, and not engage in specific political activities on matters directly affecting the work of this body;
- h. When engaging in other political activities, members should be conscious of their public role and exercise proper discretion.

6. Performance Management

- 6.1. The Chair should periodically review the performance of the Board, including the contribution, performance and conduct of individual members. Individual feedback should be provided to individual board members and in exceptional circumstances the Chair may submit advice to Home Office Ministers if satisfied that a Member;
- (a) has become unfit or unable to discharge his or her functions properly, or
 - (b) has behaved in a way that is not compatible with continuing in office.

7. Terms of appointment

- 7.1. Publicly appointed board members are appointed by the Secretary of State for the Home Department in accordance with the governance code on public appointments. Public appointments are usually for a term of 3 years, though length of tenure is ultimately for Ministers to determine. Members can be reappointed but there is a strong assumption that no individual should serve more than two terms, or 10 years in post.
- 7.2. The member or the Secretary of State for the Home Department, following advice from officials, can terminate the appointment by giving 3 months' notice.
- 7.3. Statutory board members are predominantly appointed by the organisation they represent. If the Chair is dissatisfied with the performance of a member then they will need to follow the performance management procedure and if Ministerial approval is provided the Chair will then ask the statutory organisation to appoint a new board member of a similar calibre and expertise.

8. Conduct of Meetings

8.1. Agenda

The following standard agenda shall be directed by the Chair:

- A summary of each DHR to be considered will be read out by the Secretariat and then discussed by board members, who will have advance copies to read.
- A discussion will then take place on the review, followed by a vote by board members to decide based on the majority vote whether: the DHR can be published by the Community Safety Partnership (subject to feedback from the QA Board being reflected in the report); or if the DHR should be resubmitted to the QA Board for another QA check prior to publication.

- A summary of all decisions made by CSPs not to commission DHRs. A discussion will then take place on the case followed by a vote on whether board members agree with the decision made.

8.2. *Notice of Meetings*

- The Secretariat will send the Board a Microsoft Teams meeting invite and provide all relevant DHR papers and agenda at least 1 month before the board, and provide more time where permissible.

8.3. *Frequency of meetings*

- The normal frequency of the meeting will be monthly for 2 and half hours. However, the Chair can call additional meetings if needed and to ensure any backlog in DHRs are progressed in a timely manner. An annual super board can also be arranged by the Chair providing members advance notice of at least 3 months. Super boards will be held over half a day where twice the number of DHRs will be reviewed.

9. **Attendance**

9.1. The following will attend each QA Board meeting:

- a. The Chair, or their appointed senior official should they be unavailable to chair any QA Board meeting;
- b. Secretariat;
- c. Nominated representatives of each statutory organisation;
- d. Each publicly appointed board member.

9.2. If for any reason Board members are unable to attend the meeting under exceptional circumstances, then they should provide the QA Board with feedback on DHRs for consideration and decisions will be made in their absence.

10. **Escalation**

10.1. There is no escalation process above the Chair of the QA Board should a board member be dissatisfied for any reason.

11. **Approval, review and variation of Terms of Reference Terms**

11.1. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls approves these Terms of Reference which can be reviewed and amended at any time.