

[redacted - personal information]

Date: 11 September 2018

Community Safety Division
Room A4.03
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT43SG

DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS - CONSULTATION

As Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Policing Board (the Board) I welcome the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. As you are aware the Board is not currently legally constituted and it is therefore not possible to provide a corporate response, however I trust the following comments and general observations are helpful.

The introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) in Northern Ireland is very much welcomed. As you are aware the Home Office published guidance in December 2016 on '*Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews*'¹ which stated, under the purpose of DHRs, the following, "*The purpose of a DHR is to: Prevent domestic violence and homicide and improve service responses for all domestic violence and abuse victims and their children.*"² Having reviewed Section 5 of the consultation document (Purpose of DHRs) I note the omission of victims' children within Section 5.1 (vi) which currently states, "*The purpose of the DHR is to: Prevent domestic violence and homicides and improve service responses for all domestic violence and abuse victims.*"

Recently the Attorney General for Northern Ireland issued guidance in relation to Domestic Abuse and Stalking which stated, "*In the provision of protection and support services to victims, due account must be taken of the needs of child witnesses (including recognition that children may also be victims) and due regard given to their best interests.*" Through omitting children within Section 5.1 (vi) and not following the guidance notes issued by the Home Office, there may be a risk that children could become the 'forgotten victims' and any learning or policy changes needed in this regard could be missed. I am aware that Case Management Reviews (CMRs) take place (and likewise in England, Serious Case Reviews take place), when a child dies or is seriously injured and abuse or neglect is thought to be involved. It is worth considering that children are still named as part of the

¹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575273/DHR-Statutory-Guidance-161206.pdf

² Page 9, Section 7D:-

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purpose of DHRs within guidance issued in England and Wales which allows for an all-encompassing approach to matters domestic related.

In respect of Section 6.10 which advises when a DHR will or will not be commissioned, I note that currently suicide will not be considered for inclusion in the DHR process when there is a history of domestic abuse. If this is the case there may be a genuine possibility that any lessons learnt from emotional abuse victims who tragically take their own life will not be brought to light and therefore potential victims of this type may not be properly safeguarded.

Regarding Question 14³ of the consultation document, the inclusion of a Senior Board Official to sit on the Senior Oversight Forum (SOF) could greatly enhance the forum, particularly when the Board are the main oversight body for PSNI. If a Board Official was to be invited onto the SOF it would greatly assist in the monitoring and implementation of recommendations emerging from DHR's that specifically relate to the PSNI, whilst also ensuring that all relevant bodies are represented.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation, should you have any queries in relation to this response please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

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³ Question 14:- *Do you have any comment on the organisations that would make up the Senior Oversight Forum, particularly the additional bodies that could be considered, or others that should be considered?*

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