

## Domestic Homicide Reviews – Consultation

### RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

The Department of Justice (DOJ), is seeking your views on a proposed model for the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) in Northern Ireland, which will seek opportunities for learning from cases of homicide resulting from domestic abuse or violence.

Please use this questionnaire to tell us your views on the proposed model.

Please send your response, **no later than 5pm on Friday 28 September 2018**, to:

**Department of Justice**  
Community Safety Division  
Room A4.03  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST  
BT4 3SG

Tel: 028 9052 3772

E-mail: [DOJCommunity.SafetyUnitProjMailbox@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:DOJCommunity.SafetyUnitProjMailbox@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk)

## Confidentiality and Access to Information Legislation

The Department intends to publish responses to the consultation and a summary response report on our website. Any contact details or information that will identify a respondent as a private individual will be removed prior to publication. All information will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Your information will not be shared outside of the Department.

### What rights do you have?

- You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being processed, and access to your personal data;
- You are entitled to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete;
- You have a right to have personal data erased and to prevent processing, in specific circumstances ;
- You have the right to 'block' or suppress processing of personal data, in specific circumstances;
- You have the right to data portability, in specific circumstances;
- You have the right to object to the processing, in specific circumstances;
- You have rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling.

Respondents should also be aware that the Department's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) may require that any responses not subject to specific exemptions under the Act be communicated to third parties on request.

If you have any concerns about how your personal data has been handled please contact the **Departmental Data Protection Officer**:

Tel: 028 9037 8617

Email: [DataProtectionOfficer@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:DataProtectionOfficer@justice-ni.x.gsi.gov.uk)

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office.

### **Northern Ireland Information Commissioner's Office**

**3rd Floor**

**14 Cromac Place**

**Belfast**

**BT7 2JB**

**Tel:** 028 9027 8757 or 0303 123 1114

**Email:** [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)

Website: [www.ico.org.uk/](http://www.ico.org.uk/)

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and providing input to this consultation.

## SECTION 1: ABOUT YOU

### Consultee Details

#### Question (a):

I am responding as... *(Please tick one option only)*

A member of the Public

On behalf of an organisation

Other.....*(Please specify)*

#### Question (b):

In some cases, the DOJ might need to contact respondents to seek further clarification on their response or to send out a summary of responses to the consultation.

Please tick the below consent box if you are willing to provide the DOJ with contact details for these purposes:

All information will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Name:	
Job Title: <i>(if applicable)</i>	
Organisation: <i>(if applicable)</i>	NUS-USI
Address:	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor, 42 Dublin Road,
City/Town:	Belfast
Postcode:	BT2 7HN
Email Address:	

**This consultation seeks views on a proposed model for the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) in Northern Ireland, which will seek opportunities for learning from cases of homicide resulting from domestic abuse or violence.**

**Question 1:**

**Do you have any comments to make about the purpose of a Domestic Homicide Review?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**NUS-USI believes the key focus must be on prevention and intervention at the earliest possible opportunity. We believe that having a pro-active and joined-up multi-agency and cross-departmental approach is an essential purpose of the Domestic Homicide Review.**

**The key focus must also be protecting the victim and on effectively preventing and addressing violence in all its forms.**

**Question 2:**

**Do you have anything to say about when a DHR will or will not be commissioned?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**We believe that it is important that commissioning a DHR is made as swift and as accessible a process to commence as possible, to ensure that its recommendations can be instituted quickly whenever it is required.**

**Question 3:**

**Do you have anything to say about what may 'typically' be outlined within the terms of reference?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**A key point to emphasise is that victim's family is protected, and that they are central to the process to ensure their needs are met and that their views are taken into account.**

**Question 4:**

**Do you have anything to say about:**

- **the knowledge and skills of the chair**
- **the recruitment and contingency for the role of chair?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**The Chair must have an excellent understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, the justice system, and the social work system in Northern Ireland. A knowledge around the psychology of violent behaviour may also be useful for the Chair in this role. Another element of the role may require the Chair to have good media relations skills to ensure that any work that the media are discussing is handled sensitively.**

**Question 5:**

**Do you have any comments to make about DHR panel membership?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**It is essential that the board accurately reflects the demographic breakdown of society to ensure that there is diversity within the board to help it deliver effectively across the community.**

**It is important that the panel has a broad range of expertise on all the activities that the DHR works on.**

**Question 6:**

**Do you have any comments to make about the consideration of equality and diversity issues by the Panel?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**As above it is crucial that the panel accurately reflects the demographics of the whole of society in Northern Ireland to ensure it is truly representative.**

**The panel must be responsive and must retain the confidence of the whole community, therefore be reflective of the whole society.**

**Question 7:**

**Do you have anything to say about family involvement in the process?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**The opportunity for each family to feed into and help shape the DHR process would be of significant benefit to families in confronting the situation they face, as it might help give families ownership of the DHR process.**

**This opportunity to input into the DHR process could also help safeguard others in the future, because with significant and meaningful input from the family it could help provide the authorities with the insights to take preventative steps in other situations in the future. It would help potentially create new best practices and interventions that might be able to prevent violence.**

**Question 8:**

**Do you have anything to say about the involvement of other individuals in the process?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**It is important that individuals with relevant knowledge and expertise can also be part of the DHR process (in addition to families) to try and ensure that the fullest picture of the situation can be seen.**

**In the same way as family input into the process, every aspect of this must be carried out with the utmost sensitivity and sympathy.**

**Question 9:**

**Do you have any comments about the two key elements of the DHR process:**

- (i) initial findings, learning and identification of actions needed; and**
- (ii) identification of key findings, learning, actions and longer term change**

**to improve service and the response in future cases of domestic violence and abuse?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**We believe that it is important that guidance and involvement from the PSNI and courts service feeds into the DHR process on an ongoing basis to ensure there is a pro-active, coherent and jointed-up approach to addressing all forms of domestic violence.**

**Question 10:**

**Do you have any comment on the approach proposed regarding gathering information, or any suggestions as to how best this could be undertaken?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**We believe that a transparent, responsive and fluid process of engagement is crucial to try and deliver the most beneficial outcomes for families, and also to help augment strategy on tackling domestic violence.**

**Question 11:**

**Do you have any comment on the suggested approach around publication of the DHR report and do you have any views on the frequency of report publication?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**With regard to publication of reports what must always be considered is the impact upon the family and the publication must be conducted in consultation with the family and in sensitive and understanding way.**

**Question 12:**

**Do you have any comment on the potential outcome of the reviews through the development of reports?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**It is important that all outcomes are fully fed through and absorbed into the protocols and actions of all authorities. This will help ensure a pro-active and joined-up response to help tackle domestic violence as effectively as possible.**

**Question 13:**

**Do you have any comment on the role and scope of the Senior Oversight Forum?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**NUS-USI sees the senior oversight forum as extremely important, because it will help shared new ways of potentially improving interventions from the authorities to address all form of domestic violence.**

**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?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**NUS-USI believes that given their central from in the administration of law enforcement/justice, the PSNI should be involved the Senior Oversight Forum. Equality groups (including those representing the LGBT+ community, disabled people, and migrants and ethnic minorities) should also be included in the Senior Oversight Forum to provide expert insight. As disabled people are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence, it is very important that the voices of disabled people are represented in the Senior Oversight Forum.**



**Question 15:**

**Do you have any comment on the potential implications the proposed model may have on equality or human rights?**

If yes, please provide comments below.

**No**

**Question 16:**

**Do you have any further comment to make about the proposed model?**

It would be helpful if you reference which part of the document you are commenting on. If you refer to any other documents, please provide the title, author and if possible approximate date of publication or alternatively a hyperlink if it can be accessed online.

**NUS-USI wants to see repeal of the legislation brought in around the time of the Troubles making it a criminal offence for information on serious crimes not to be reported to police. This has the potential to create a veil of secrecy that protects the perpetrator and puts the victim in serious danger, as a victim might be scared to come forward if they did not report a previous assault upon them to the police.**

**This law – Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 – is an illogical and potentially dangerous provision that goes against personal freedom under the auspices of preventing terrorist offences. This law was arguably never justifiable: we now have peace in Northern Ireland and this law must be repealed as a matter of urgency. Doing so may help deliver increased wellbeing and protection for victims of all forms of violence.**

