

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

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.

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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

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

Website: 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:	Women and Staff
Job Title: <i>(if applicable)</i>	
Organisation: <i>(if applicable)</i>	Women's Aid Armaghdown
Address:	7 Downshire Place
City/Town:	Newry
Postcode:	BT34 1DZ
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.

This is a pivotal process in seeking to eliminate domestic and sexual violence in the 21st century. It is long overdue and we welcome this and believe that the DHRs will go a long way in learning for all those organisations involved with victims of domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

We asked women who use our services to comment of the Domestic Homicide Reviews – Consultation and we had a number of women take part in these consultations.

This is a collective response from all those who wanted to be involved in the consultation from our organisation.

Comments:

“All seems well explained and fine.”

Question 2:

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

If yes, please provide comments below.

6.7 In relation to domestic and sexual violence and abuse (DSVA) a 'one off' incident is not possible. The very nature of DSVA is a pattern of on-going abusive behaviours. These behaviours may not present as abuse due to manipulation, lack of understanding, fear of reporting etc. Evidence shows that murder/suicide often presents as a 'one off' incident with no previously reported incidents that come to the attention of services. This does not mean that there have been no previous incidents of abuse. There is a lot of learning from cases that appear to be 'one off' and should be commissioned on the basis of the level of fear that victim was experiencing to not report to services.

Comments:

"The review needs to take into account and examine all the 6 categories of abuse".

6.7 "At the very least GP and medical and employer should look for changes in the behaviour of the victim and should have knowledge of private counselling."

6.8 Families of victims require comprehensive reasons for not commissioning a DHR and women feel that there needs to be a process to appeal this decision.

6.9 Question: Will a review be commissioned if the victim is 16+ and the perpetrator is an adult?

6.10 We feel by excluding victims who have died by suicide this review is not thinking long term. We believe that a woman who have died by suicide and there is a history of DSVA there should be a DHR. More women will die by suicide as this is kept under review. A DHR for a victim that has died by suicide as a result of DSVA would promote the learning for all those involved.

Comments:

"Death by suicide needs to be included!"

"Totally agree" (relating to the previous woman's comment)

"There is a lot of learning from the NHS on previous attempts, etc."

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.

Comment:

“Seems to cover everything.”

“Private counsellors should be held accountable.”

“Full duration of relationship should be covered, including previous relationships.”

“Who would they be ultimately accountable to?”

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.

6.16 The chair should also have knowledge in trauma and coercive control as these are pivotal in the understanding of DSVAs.

Comment:

“Women’s Aid could have a role.” (regarding the knowledge and skills of the chair)

“DSVA is so complex; it is more than just that one incident of violence. It is not the stereotypical view of violent attacks; it is the manipulation and all the other stuff that goes along with it.”

It is this that the SOF needs to understand.

6.22/6.23 Women want frontline/grassroots service providers present at DHRs.

“And judges and someone from Respect and Nexus”

Question 5:

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

If yes, please provide comments below.

Comments:

“Women’s Aid, as a lead agency must have a prominent role!”

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.

No

Question 7:

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

If yes, please provide comments below.

Comments:

“Very important – mindful of the life of the children. They can be used as a weapon by the perpetrator.”

“Friends and colleagues too if they wish.”

Question 8:

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

If yes, please provide comments below.

6.27 It is very important to understand the level of risk the perpetrators family may pose to the victim's family. The level of risk to the victim's family must be given high priority when conducting the review.

Comments:

"This is relevant."

"This may have benefit but needs to be very carefully reviewed."

Should we add something about extended grooming carried out by AP of his and her family and friends to ensure he presents himself as a "good son, husband, friend, dad etc.."

This is partly what enables the perpetrator to carry out coercive control and abuse under the radar of their closest family and friends' network.

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.

Comments:
“Seems ok.”

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.

Comments:
“Seems ok.”

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.

Comments:

“This is very important to bring the issue of DSVAs out into the open.”

“Unsure about this area.”

There were mixed feelings about the publication of the DHR reports by the women using Women’s Aid Armaghdown.

6.31 “Key indicators between reports should be mapped and tracked.”

6.33 “2 reports for sensitivity to victims’ families. 1 detailed non-public and a summary report for publication. With NI 5 cases per year, communities would be able to work out the victim.”

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.

Comments:

“So long as they are managed in such a way as to audit improvements, achievements and outcomes, then how that is done, isn’t the focus.”

Q: As an organisation stretched to its current resource limits with the added pressure of continually growing waiting lists, what government funding will be recognised to directly support front line services to increase protection for those at risk of Domestic Homicide?

Question 13:

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

If yes, please provide comments below.

6.42 What constitutes a conflict of interest? Is this professional or personal one?

Comments:

“What powers will the Chair have to enforce the recommendations of the DHR?”

“Women’s Aid need to have a lead role.”

Point 6.40 Q: As the lead agency in delivery of Domestic and Sexual Violence services should WA not be specifically named in the list similar to other agencies such as Victims Support?

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.

Comments:

“Women’s Aid Federation.”

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.

Comments:

“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.

Question: What funding will be available for these reviews?

Question: How does the DHR sit alongside the PSNI investigation?

Comments:

“Who will draw up the governance for DHRs?”

“The chair will need an extensive knowledge of the nature of DSVAs.”

“Money should be made available at all costs. Women’s Aid Federation need to have a key role and as the lead agency their profile should be stated throughout. Otherwise this is a positive and progressive model.”

“Action taken processes change.”