Home Office

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Councillor Michael Hill OBE,
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6 February 2014

Dear Mr Hill,

Thank you for submitting the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) report from Kent to the Home Office Quality Assurance (QA) Panel. The review was considered at the QA Panel meeting in January.

The QA Panel would like to thank you for conducting this review and for providing them with the final report. In terms of the assessment of DHR reports the QA Panel judges them as either adequate or inadequate. It is clear that a lot of effort has gone into producing this report, and I am pleased to tell you that it has been judged as adequate by the QA Panel.

The QA Panel would like to commend you on this report, which the QA Panel felt demonstrated a good understanding of domestic violence.

There were some issues that the Panel felt might benefit from more detail and which you may wish to consider before you publish the final report:

- Paragraph 5.12 of Executive Summary which states there is "...no concrete evidence that either Christopher or Elizabeth displayed any real desire to change their lifestyle in order to reduce the risks that they posed to each other and their children", could appear to a reader to be victim blaming. The Panel considered the text could be amended to ensure it remains victim focussed;
- The Panel considered that including some more text that explores the role of the other relevant agencies would be helpful; and,
- Please explicitly draw out the links between the recommendations in the report and the Action Plan, to support proper governance to monitor the progress of the Community Safety Partnership on each of the recommendations.

The QA Panel also notes there are a number of recommendations that are of national relevance (Actions three to eight of the Action Plan). Action three will be communicated to Ministry of Justice colleagues, and they will explore your suggestion regarding strategic level engagement with Probation Trusts. A response will be sent directly to you following their consideration.

The QA Panel also noted Action four which suggested that "The Home Office...consider issuing guidance to police forces regarding [the] transfer of information between police forces when victims and offenders involved in domestic abuse move". The Police National Database already enables users to access all events records relating to domestic incidents regardless of location, or place of residence. We will discuss with the College of Policing whether further guidance or training is needed to ensure police use the system to its fullest capability.

On actions five, six, and eight regarding the Home Office working at national level with health colleagues, including mental health, the QA Panel consider that the Statutory Guidance clearly sets out the responsibilities of such statutory agencies, to assist in the DHR process to produce the most effective review possible. For example, the Clinical Commissioning Groups, and the NHS England. The Home Office will discuss with the relevant health agencies at a national level, to promote improved engagement with this process.

On action seven, that recommends the Home Office issues guidance regarding the involvement in the DHR of persons convicted of domestic homicide, who have been victims of domestic abuse, the "Home Office Domestic Homicide Review Toolkit Guide to Overview Report Writing" should assist, as it suggests the Chairs should do their "...best to hear from the victim's family, the perpetrator and from others who might have known, such as friends, colleagues, employer and those in the local community". The Guide can be found at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/143782/dhr-report-guide.pdf

Also, where the Chair wishes to interview the perpetrator potential disclosure issues should be discussed with the police Senior Investigating Officer, the CPS and the Coroner representative as appropriate as set out in section nine of the Statutory Guidance.

We do not need to see another version of the report, but I would ask you to include this letter as an appendix to the report when published.

Yours sincerely,

Christian Papaleontiou, Acting Chair of the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel
Head of the Interpersonal Violence Team, Violent Crime Unit