

Cllr Michael Hill OBE
Kent County Council
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XQ

28 March 2023

Dear Cllr Hill,

Thank you for submitting the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) report (Kitty) for Kent Community Safety Partnership (CSP) to the Home Office Quality Assurance (QA) Panel. The report was considered at the QA Panel meeting on 25th January 2023. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The QA Panel felt the DHR demonstrated positive engagement with Kitty's family and provided an insight into her life. It was encouraging to see the DHR taking into account the concerns raised by the family when determining if the perpetrator should be interviewed. The identification and inclusion of a substance misuse specialist on the panel was positive. There was good use of research throughout the report, particularly in the equality and diversity section which made appropriate links to relevant protective characteristics, and in the recommendations of the report. Overall, the report reflects an honest and transparent attempt to understand the events and opportunities to intervene.

The QA Panel felt that there are some aspects of the report which may benefit from further revision, but the Home Office is content that on completion of these changes, the DHR may be published.

Areas for final development:

- There is some victim-blaming language within the report which should be addressed.
- The review recognises non-fatal strangulation from the admission of the perpetrator. This is a useful and important section, but unfortunately there is no follow up from this in the action plan. Given the new offence in the UK and the risk to victims, it would be useful to see what can be done to ensure greater awareness and understanding of the issue in the local area.

- Although there may be a very good explanation for the use of 'Town A', it distances the review from any connection to the community in which Kitty lived and any possible role there could have been for that community in understanding what was happening and, going forward, putting things in place. For example, the section on perpetrator support clearly states that even if Nick had sought help, the only route available in Town A was through the criminal justice route. More could have been explored in regard to the postcode lottery of community level and third sector support.
- There was a lack of understanding of the importance of addressing perpetrator behaviour within the report. There are a range of instances where either the perpetrator would have benefitted from support that was not available, or the processes for referral to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) or to perpetrator programmes were too difficult to enable access. Without adequate understanding of the provision or access to it, there is very little support for people who actively seek help or recognise their behaviour is wrong. Clearer pathways, information on national support and the importance of looking at this as well as what more support the victim could have accessed, are important.
- The separation of the victim from partners is often mentioned but there is no discussion about this being a risk factor for domestic homicide.
- There are potential signs of economic abuse which are not recognised, including multiple arguments about money and Nick assaulting Kitty (14.42 and 14.45), Nick taking Kitty's phone (16.1.6) and Kitty's daughter sharing that she had found employment before she was killed, and that Nick would not like this (16.1.13).
- Interventions around parenting and child protection only focussed on the mother, and a lack of 'whole family' thinking when services assessed the relationship between the victim and her children could have been drawn out. The lack of holistic approach to a family setting, no matter how dysfunctional that setting, is something that needs to be looked at in terms of importance of seeing the impact of behaviours on everyone within that family setting. The violent actions of the perpetrator will have also had an impact on the children as will the act of taking them into care. The fact that the perpetrator was exacerbating the vulnerability of the victim, and her ability to care for the children, was ignored and the potential impact not addressed may also impact on the children in the future.
- The action plans need to be outcome focussed, with targeted specific actions that are time bound and reviewed. This action plan would benefit from some of the analysis in the main report being used to develop more robust actions.

Once completed the Home Office would be grateful if you could provide us with a digital copy of the revised final version of the report with all finalised attachments and appendices and the weblink to the site where the report will be published. Please ensure this letter is published alongside the report.

Please send the digital copy and weblink to DHREnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk. This is for our own records for future analysis to go towards highlighting best practice and to inform public policy.

Please also send a digital copy to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner at DHR@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk

On behalf of the QA Panel, I would like to thank you, the report chair and author, and other colleagues for the considerable work that you have put into this review.

Yours sincerely,

Lynne Abrams

Chair of the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel