



Suzanne Harris  
Senior Commissioning Officer (Interpersonal Violence)  
Somerset County Council

6 April 2021

Dear Suzanne,

Thank you for submitting the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) report (020) for Somerset Community Safety Partnership to the Home Office. Due to the COVID-19 situation the Quality Assurance (QA) Panel was unable to meet as scheduled 24<sup>th</sup> February therefore the report was assessed by a virtual process. For the virtual Panel, members provided their comments by email, the Home Office secretariat summarised the feedback and the Panel agreed the feedback.

The QA Panel felt that the report is well written, thorough and probing. The personal tribute at the start of the report puts John immediately at the center of the review and gives status to the victim and his loved ones. The sensitive nature of the review and the familial involvement, alongside this tribute, allows the victim's voice and vulnerabilities to come through and fully engage the reader. The report considers the complexity of the case with passion and without victim-blaming any party.

The report illustrates why it is critical that CSPs commission reviews into suicide when there is a history of domestic abuse. This case was recommended for a DHR from the local area in its routine audit of suicides, a method which is commended by the QA Panel. The engagement of the victim's family, his close friend and the pastor provide rich context and much value-added information. The support given/offered to these participants is very good practice. The table in 15.3.28 showing the use of DASH is also very useful and the analysis of missed MARAC referrals and the MARAC itself is robust.

The recommendations in the report are thoroughly considered, missed opportunities outlined and lessons learnt are brought out clearly. The focus on avoiding bias and the emphasis on well-defined information sharing in meetings is commended. There is evidence of improving practice throughout and previous local DHR learnings are appropriately referenced throughout the report.

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 development:

- Proof read and check formatting, for example, the date of death needs to be removed, sections 16.1.3 and 16.1.6 repeat themselves and 16.2.6 uses inappropriate language when discussing learning for frontline workers on the way victims present themselves.
- It would have been useful to have had an independent DA agency on the panel and representation from an organisation with specific expertise in supporting male victims of DA.
- The nature of the perpetrator as a person is lost without contribution from the perpetrator, their friends or family. There is an explanation as to why it was not possible to engage with the alleged perpetrator but no further explanation as to if the family and friends were contacted or why they didn't engage.
- Given this is a system level failure, the action plan should provide assurance that the agencies involved have identified collective outcomes to make the future safer. There also needs to be a more specific timeline included against the actions which are listed and an indication as to how delivery will contribute towards actual outcomes that potential victims and the wider public can judge against.
- It needs to be clarified whether the family were sent the report in advance to meeting with the chair.
- Good referencing practice needs to be used consistently throughout.
- Section 5.3 states that Peter Stride supported Mark Wolski as the Deputy Chair. Appendix A includes a statement of independence from Mark but not for Peter Stride which should be added.
- It would be useful to clarify what support is available to victims who live with their perpetrator and how they are offered support in section 15.7.3.
- The report would benefit from exploring the threat of the victim losing his flat if he continued to let the perpetrator in his house in 15.11.9 in order to address issues around re-victimisation.
- The report confuses 'potential escalation' referral criteria with 'repeat case' criteria which needs to be reviewed to ensure the correct one is being referenced and the difference between the two is explained.
- Whilst the DHR highlights issues regarding Somerset Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (SIDA) not contacting John, it also needs to consider if them not supporting his partner as a high-risk victim is a barrier.
- In 18.1.2 when screening techniques are mentioned it would be useful to make reference to the Respect Toolkit, particularly in the instances when a RIC was complete with both parties. In addition, at 14.2.23 there was a missed opportunity to signpost to the Respect phoneline in response to his concern regarding his behaviour. It would be useful to have a recommendation around perpetrator management pathways.

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](mailto:DHREnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk). This is for our own records for future analysis to go towards highlighting best practice and to inform public policy.

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