



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
11 September 2014

**INVEST TO SAVE BUDGET
DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEW RESEARCH
PROJECT**

Purpose of the Report

1. This report is an update on the Domestic Homicide Review Research Project that the Police and Crime Commissioner Bob Jones had approved funding for from the Invest to Save budget in September 2013. The bid that was approved was to commission research into the work undertaken by the seven Local Police and Crime Boards in respect of their statutory duty to conduct domestic homicide reviews. The Heads of Community Safety felt that there was a need for a collective West Midlands response to learning the lessons from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and the prevention of homicide.

Background

2. Community Safety Partnerships have had statutory responsibility for undertaking domestic homicide reviews since 13 April 2011. A review must be conducted in circumstances where the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they are related or with whom they have had an intimate relationship or a person of the same household. The purpose of the reviews is to identify the lessons that can be learnt from the death. No additional resource was made available to Partnerships to meet the statutory requirement.
3. The direct costs of undertaking each DHR can vary considerably subject to the scale of the review to be undertaken. The average range has been shown to be between £17k and £28k. Indirect costs for public services include officer time in meeting the requirements of the review process including attendance at DHR panels, completion of Individual Management Reviews and on-going monitoring of recommendations. The costs to the public purse arising from homicide are estimated to have an average cost of over £1million per murder. Separate to the substantial financial cost however, is the loss of life to victims and the immeasurable costs to families devastated by these events.
4. The need for co-ordinated multi-agency work to prevent domestic violence, abuse and homicide is equally well documented. The seven partnerships believe that more proactive work is needed to enhance collaborative practice across agencies to reduce the number of deaths occurring; through learning lessons from the DHRs undertaken since April 2011. West Midlands can take a proactive approach to

identifying areas for improvement to cut the number of deaths and substantially reduce the costs involved.

5. More proactive work was needed to enhance collaborative practice across agencies in order to reduce the number of deaths occurring; through learning lessons from the DHRs undertaken since April 2011.
6. There were a number of desired outcomes from the research which included:
 - A clear policy steer on common themes emerging from DHRs conducted so far across the region.
 - Recommendations emerging requiring policy change or improved practice.
 - A stronger regional strategic voice for organisational change
 - Coordinated implementation
 - Improved identification of domestic abuse victims; earlier, targeted intervention; reduced number of homicides
 - Sharing best practice / good practice
7. The partnerships commissioned an external resource – Dr Lucy Neville is a lecturer in Criminology and Dr Erin Sanders-McDonagh is a lecturer in Sociology. They are based in the Department of Criminology & Sociology, School of Law, Middlesex University.
8. The research provides a collation of the key learnings from thirteen (13) DHRs completed or underway across the West Midlands area. These include DHRs that have been finalised and published, but some areas within the West Midlands were able to share DHRs that were near completion, but had not had final sign off from the Home Office. As such, we have anonymized the DHRs and assigned them random numbers (from 1-13), to ensure that key details are kept confidential. It should be noted that there are thirty-five (35) DHRs finished or being undertaken currently in the West Midlands area, so there is much scope for these findings to be expanded upon in the future.
9. One of the main aims when reviewing the documents was to find common issues that arose out of the reports, and to try to draw conclusions about best practice in relation to existing literature around the key areas that emerged. Therefore individual DHRs have been looked at to understand the key issues that led to a homicide, but they have been situated within a wider context so that a more general and far-reaching set of recommendations can be made.
10. The executive summary of the report is attached to this report at Appendix 1 and the full report - Preventing Domestic Violence and Abuse: Common Themes and Lessons Learned from West Midlands' DHRs is attached at Appendix 2.

Dissemination Event

11. On the 2 July 2014, a regional dissemination of findings event was held at Maple House, with over 90 representatives from agencies across the West Midlands. Assistant Police and Crime Commissioner Judy Foster attended on behalf of the late Police and Crime Commissioner, Bob Jones. There were a number of key messages:

- That this research is only the beginning, and to deliver the outcomes within the report, all organisations need to be prepared to consider how we can join up the respective services.
- We need to look at how we can embed a greater awareness and an effective response to domestic violence across all those services.
- The Police and Crime Commissioner's office would continue to support collaborative working across the West Midlands around domestic violence.

Next Steps

12. There will be follow up engagement and learning events for the dissemination of findings in each of the seven Local Police and Crime Board areas where required.
13. The Heads of Community Safety across the seven areas will develop an action plan arising from the report and this will be monitored through the quarterly Heads of Community Safety meeting, and the meetings of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. £30,000 was allocated from the Invest to Save Budget 2013-14.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. Schedule 9 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 provides commissioners with the powers to award crime and disorder grants to any organisations and projects they consider will help them achieve their crime prevention and wider priorities.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

16. Domestic violence affects people from all social, racial and financial backgrounds. It affects men and women, old and young, heterosexual couples and homosexual couples alike. Working in partnership to develop a response to domestic violence and resulting domestic homicides is a priority and therefore the recommendations from this research need to translate into improved services on the ground.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. The Board is asked to note the contents of the report.

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