

**WEST MIDLANDS POLICE
AND CRIME
COMMISSIONER**

NON-CONFIDENTIAL

NOTICE OF DECISION

036/2013

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Title: **Invest to Save Budget Business Case – Domestic Homicide Review Research Project**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commissioner has passported the Home Office Community Safety Fund allocation of £6,969,000 to the seven Community Safety Partnerships in the West Midlands. In addition the Commissioner decided to allocate up to £350,000 for non-recurring and invest to save schemes, subject to the submission of appropriate business cases. This is a one-off budget for 2013-14 and partnerships are encouraged to identify projects that will lead to more efficient and effective working practices.

Through the work of the Heads of Community Safety from each of the seven local authorities within the Force area, a project has been identified to conduct research into the statutory work undertaken by the seven community safety partnerships in respect of domestic homicide reviews. The outcomes sought from the research being:

- a clear policy steer on common themes emerging from domestic homicide reviews conducted so far across the region.
- recommendations 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

DECISION

I have considered the attached business case and approve £30,000 funding from the Invest to Save Budget. I have retained an option to reconsider the allocation once the tendering process has been completed.

I have an expectation that there will be a commitment from partners to support and implement the recommendations in the research.

Members of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board made the following recommendation which I approved:

- the Terms of Reference should be broadened to include research and other significant DHRs nationally in order to influence the recommendations. This is to ensure that the recommendations are not restricted to the current six DHR reviews.

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in this decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for the West Midlands Office for Policing and Crime. Any interests are indicated below.

Signature.....Bob Jones.....

Date.....4 September 2013.....

NON - CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE TO THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In addition to the Home Office Community Safety Fund allocation, the Commissioner has allocated up to £350,000 to Community Safety Partnerships for non-recurring and invest to save schemes, subject to the submission of appropriate business cases. This is a one-off budget and partnerships are encouraged to identify projects that will lead to more efficient and effective working practices. Attached at **Appendix A** is a business case submitted by the Heads of Community Safety from the seven local authorities within the Force area.

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.

Between them the seven partnerships have concluded six reviews with a further 19 in train. As would be expected on a population basis alone, the number of reviews conducted varies between local authorities with Solihull yet to have to conduct a review and Birmingham having commenced thirteen.

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.

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.

The attached business case outlines the proposed research with its intended outcomes which are:

- 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

The partnerships proposal is to commission an external or an identified internal resource to:

- engage with HOCs to access all completed DHRs and to identify any further DHRs near completion.
- take account of changing context and circumstances surrounding each death, to collate findings/recommendations from each DHR to identify common themes or areas for improvement.
- make recommendations to organisations and/or service sector where common themes are identified to make clear recommendations which will apply to either an organisation, service sector (e.g. commissioned mental health providers) or recommend changed practice across agencies.
- develop an action plan for improvement, in discussion with HOCS, who will have overall responsibility for implementation. Future HOCS meetings will be used to monitor progress of delivery.
- organise a regional event for dissemination of findings; with follow up engagement and learning events for dissemination of findings in each of the CSP areas where required
- commission learning events to build the knowledge and skills of agencies involved in the DHR process

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Invest to Save budget has an allocation of £350,000. This is the first application to the fund.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

The Commissioner will ensure that in the operation of the Invest to Save budget, consideration is given to the equality implications of any decision he makes.

Schedule of Background Papers

None

Public Access to Information

Information contained in this decision is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other legislation. This decision will be made available on the Commissioner's website.

Business Case for Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews in the West Midlands Police Force Area (WMPFA)

Submission by West Midlands Heads of Community Safety

Summary

This business case outlines the need for a collective West Midlands response to learning the lessons from Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and the prevention of homicide.

West Midlands	Funding sought
Consultancy/research: key themes, policy change; improved practice in DHR across WMPFA.	£20K
Learning, development and action plan implementation across WMPFA	£30K
Total	£50K

Background & Context

DHRs were established on a statutory basis under Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act (2004). This provision came into force on 13th April 2011; responsibility for undertaking domestic homicide reviews lies with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) within the victim’s area of residence. The act states:

Domestic homicide review means a review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by—

- (a) a person to whom he was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or*
- (b) a member of the same household as himself, held with a view to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the death.*

The recently revised guidance issued in June 2013 has stipulated that where this definition of a domestic homicide is met, then a DHR must be undertaken. No additional resources were made available to CPS to meet this new statutory requirement.

Incidence of DHRs

The following table demonstrates the frequency of DHRs within the West Midlands since April 2011 to present.

CSP Area	Total DHRs commenced since 13.4.11	DHRs completed*
Birmingham	13 ¹	2
Coventry	2	1
Dudley	0	0
Sandwell	4	1
Solihull	0	0
Walsall	3 (+1 suicide and +1 DHR tagged on to a SCR)	1
Wolverhampton	1	1
Total	25	6

The direct costs of undertaking each DHR can vary considerably subject to the scale of the review to be undertaken and the economies of scale variant across CSP areas. The average range has been shown to be between £17k and £28k. Indirect costs for public services include officer time in feeding into the review process through attendance at DHR panels, completion of IMRs and on-going monitoring of recommendations for example.

Preventing Homicide

There is a compelling economic case for the prevention of domestic homicide. The costs to the public purse arising from homicide are well documented with 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.

The need for co-ordinated multi-agency work to prevent domestic violence, abuse and homicide is equally well documented. Although many areas will have in place provision to address issues of domestic violence and abuse, either through offender management programmes, MARAC or wider support services, increasing resource reductions are jeopardising sustainability of this provision.

More proactive work is needed to enhance more 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.

Funding request to commission a piece of work – to identify key themes, policy change and improved practice from Domestic Homicide Reviews across West Midlands Police Force Area (WMPFA).

There are 25 DHRs either concluded or at various stages of completion across the WMPFA. These are detailed in the table above. From the DHRs completed, there are a total of 55 recommendations which are currently being taken forward independently of one another; an identification of common themes and clarity on required policy or practice change within an

¹ Although 13 DHRs have been commenced in Birmingham, the Home Office has agreed to 1 being decommissioned

*DHRs completed and submitted to the Home Office for approval

organisation will carry greater weight if the call for change applies across all 7 Local Authority areas, or even if endorsed directly by the PCC.

At several meetings of the Heads of Community Safety across the 7 Local Authority areas in the West Midlands, consensus was reached about the benefits of commissioning such a piece of work. The outcome of which will provide:

- 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

Rationale

Revised Home Office guidance for conducting DHRs, issued in June 2013 has confirmed that amongst other areas of responsibility detailed with the Terms of Reference for the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel, it is responsible for:

- Disseminating lessons learned at a national level and effective practice;
- Identifying serious failings and common themes;
- Incorporating the learning (including any national lessons learned) into local and regional training programmes.

Work at a national level has not yet been undertaken to collate common themes arising out of DHRs. Whilst there are likely to be clear lessons emanating from this work, once completed, there will be tangible benefits of understanding where these common themes are present across the WMPFA and where a potential alteration of policy and practice across the region in response, will identify domestic violence victims and reduce their vulnerability. There is no indication from the Home Office of timescales for completing a national lessons learned exercise and disseminating this information widely.

HOCS have a positive track record of working closely together to improve practice across the WMPFA. Any improvements for increased safeguarding of domestic abuse victims, whilst in itself is its own reward, will also seek to reduce the resource demands placed on community safety teams for conducting DHRs.

Process and Costs

Capacity within each of the 7 Community Safety teams across the West Midlands area is extremely limited, with increasing demands being placed on reducing resources. Heads of Community Safety are required to focus primarily on completion of DHRs within the specified guidelines and timescales, and to monitor oversight of implementation once these are completed; HOCS have indicated there is no capacity for this piece of work to be undertaken either by one, or a group of areas.

It is proposed to commission an external, or an identified internal resource to undertake this work. To involve:

- i) Engaging with HOCS to access all completed DHRs and to identify any further DHRs near completion. Given the delays with receiving approval from the Home Office Quality and Assurance Panel, it is proposed that access to unpublished DHR Overview reports and action plans are sourced through HOCS.
- ii) Taking account of changing context and circumstances surrounding each death, to collate findings/recommendations from each DHR to identify common themes or areas for improvement.
- iii) Where common themes are identified, to make clear recommendations which will apply to either an organisation, service sector (e.g. commissioned mental health providers) or recommend changed practice across agencies.
- iv) To develop an action plan for improvement, in discussion with HOCS, who will have overall responsibility for implementation. Future HOCS meetings will be used to monitor progress of delivery.
- v) To organise a regional event for dissemination of findings; with follow up engagement and learning events for dissemination of findings in each of the CSP areas where required
- vi) To commission learning events to build the knowledge and skills of agencies involved in the DHR process

Commissioning

A Lead CSP/Local Authority will lead commissioning arrangements on behalf of the 7 CSPs within the WMPFA. The lead CSP will seek delegated authority and secure appropriate authorisations to commission this is an external piece of work. Anticipated costs for commissioning the initial phase of this work is £20K; falling short of the financial threshold requiring external tender. The remaining resource will be used to host both a regional dissemination event of findings, local events where required and implementation of the resulting action plan.

Specification for the work can be drafted with support of HOCS and proposals from suitably qualified individuals or organisations invited through advertising on the 7 websites of the CSPs. In line with Local Authority financial requirements, only 3 written quotations are required for projects valued at < £50,000.

Timescales

If funding approval is secured from the PCC's office and this process followed, the following indicative timescales would apply:

Project specification drafted and agreed by HOCS – end July 2013

Delegated Local Authority Permissions secured for commissioning external provider – mid September 2013

Invitation for proposals advertised – mid September 2013

Closing date for submission of proposals – mid October 2013

Identification of preferred provider – mid-October 2013

Work commences – November 2013

Interim report (early findings) prepared - December 2013 / January 2014

Final report and action plan prepared with presentation of findings to HOCS –February 2014.
Regional event to disseminate learning points to a wider audience March 2014.

Project Lead

Wolverhampton has agreed to act as the project lead for commissioning this piece of work on behalf of the 7 CSPs within the WMPFA.

Normal Local Authority financial regulations will be adhered to, with Wolverhampton City Council acting as accountable body for any funding awarded for this project, which will be ring-fenced for this purpose.

HOCs meetings will be used as a vehicle for oversight and project direction.