

# Partnership working and multi-agency responses/mechanisms

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 16 September 2015 Updated 6 September 2018

Written by College of Policing

28 mins read

## Partnership working and information sharing

Cooperation between agencies is important to help reduce the risk of cases slipping through the safeguarding system and stopping domestic abuse at an early stage or preventing it from happening in the first place. It makes it possible to see the whole picture, facilitating:

- early effective risk identification
- improved information sharing
- joint decision making
- coordinated action to assess, manage and reduce risk

Senior officers should ensure their forces have well-developed and clear [information sharing agreements \(ISAs\)](#) with partner agencies. These ISAs should be regularly reviewed at force level and supervisors should monitor police information sharing to ensure that it complies with the ISA. Supervisors should, in particular, review requests from other agencies for information containing sensitive and personal details.

See also [Department of Health \(2012\) 'Striking the Balance' Practical Guidance on the application of Caldicott Guardian principles to Domestic Violence and MARACs.](#)

For detailed guidance on information sharing for practitioners, see [HM Government Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners](#). This document includes information about gaining consent from victims, sharing information when consent is refused, and suggested components of information-sharing protocols.

For further information see the authorised professional practice (APP) on [Sharing police information](#) and on [Information management](#).

## Sharing information with the civil court system

Evidence gathered in the context of a criminal investigation could also be used in the family court in child contact hearings, care proceedings and civil court order hearings. Where possible, police officers should inform victims of domestic abuse that records of incidents (including recordings of 999 calls, withdrawal statements, interviews, photographs and forensic medical reports) may provide evidence of domestic abuse in situations where suspects are not charged or prosecuted, for example, child contact hearings or applications for civil court orders. If there are current criminal proceedings, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should be involved in any decision to pass information on to the family court as it could have implications for the criminal case. Information sharing might assist the safety planning process for victims and any children, and should also help the court make informed judgments. This requires police forces to maintain information-sharing protocols with the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS).

Information might be sought by agencies involved in the family law system in relation to the victim, suspect, children and other previous partners or family members. For further information about the interface between family and criminal proceedings, see [Law Society \(2007\) Related Family and Criminal Proceedings: A Good Practice Guide](#).

### Checklist – sharing evidence for family court hearings

When assisting family court hearings, police officers should:

- use the [2024 Disclosure of information between family And criminal agencies and jurisdictions](#) adopted by the CPS, the judiciary, police and local authorities.
- compile information promptly and comprehensively, as delays might lead to the family court postponing its decision relating to a child's future
- if there are current criminal proceedings, consult the CPS before passing information on to the family court
- provide police reports detailing incidents of domestic abuse that have come to police attention, particularly information relating to any children normally resident at the address and any observations made by attending officers

- provide relevant witness statements
- provide photographic or visually recorded evidence to the court, when available
- provide first accounts made by the officer attending the incident, including the seriousness and the effect of the incident upon the victim and any children

Family proceedings are subject to different time pressures. Knowing at an early stage what evidence already exists can avoid duplication of time and cost, for example, where it avoids having to order further medical/psychiatric evidence which can take weeks or months. Where a formal decision has not yet been made as to disclosure, officers should consider making available on request a provisional index or schedule of existing evidence to assist the family court in making its directions. Forces could adopt a local template for this purpose.

The [\*\*disclosure of information between family and criminal agencies and jurisdictions \(2024\)\*\*](#) agreed by CPS, judiciary, police and local authorities sets out procedures for information sharing in linked proceedings. It has been developed to facilitate timely and consistent bilateral disclosure between the criminal justice system and the family justice system. It sets out processes for:

- early notification to the family court and local authority (LA) that criminal proceedings have been started, along with relevant details and timescales
- timely and consistent disclosure of information and documents from the police and CPS into the family justice system
- early notification to the police and CPS of applications for disclosure of prosecution material
- timely and expeditious responses by the LA to information requests by the police of material that would assist a criminal investigation
- linked directions hearings in linked criminal and care proceedings

## **Issues specific to domestic abuse victims in the family court**

Police information can be used by victims in the following ways.

- It can support an application for a civil injunction to protect them and their children. Evidence of a police warning or words of advice having been issued, a record of an out of court disposal such as a caution which provides evidence of an admission, or an officer's witness statement can all assist with establishing grounds for an injunction.
- It can help to secure legal aid in child contact proceedings. Victims of domestic abuse may get funding in such cases under the [\*\*Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act\*\*](#)

[2012, schedule 1, paragraph 12](#), but they need to supply evidence of the abuse, for example, a caution, conviction, or a current or pending prosecution. If this is not provided, legal aid is unlikely to be granted. See the [Civil Legal Aid \(Procedure\) Regulations 2012 regulation 33](#) for a full list of possible supporting documents.

Accurate information is also central to child contact hearings, particularly as to whether a parent:

- has been arrested, charged or released without charge and the nature of any charges or potential charges
- is subject to bail conditions (pre- or post-charge), precisely what these are and if they have been breached

Although victims can provide some of this information to their family solicitors, it is often inaccurate or incomplete. As a matter of good practice, therefore, when officers are aware of current or potential family court proceedings, they should identify a point of contact for the victim to provide to their solicitor if they wish to confirm correct details and the existence of any helpful information.

## The domestic abuse commissioner

The domestic abuse commissioner is an independent voice that speaks on behalf of victims and survivors. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 gives the domestic abuse commissioner specific powers that enables them to fulfil this role. It places legal duties on public sector bodies to cooperate with the domestic abuse commissioner and to respond to any recommendations they make to them.

The commissioner uses their statutory powers to raise public awareness and hold both agencies and government to account in tackling domestic abuse. This includes the police.

The domestic abuse commissioner works towards all victims and survivors (including children) receiving the support they need, when they need it, no matter who they are or where they live. As well as a focus on criminal proceedings surrounding domestic abuse, the commissioner works to improve the experience of victims navigating family court.

For more information see: [About us - Domestic Abuse Commissioner](#)

## Role of police domestic abuse specialists in partnership working

## **Monitoring the police response to domestic abuse and joint monitoring of multi-agency response**

Domestic abuse specialist teams should take an active role in establishing strong multi-agency links locally through local domestic abuse forums, specialist domestic violence courts (SDVCs), multi-agency risk assessment conferences (**MARACs**) and specific project initiatives undertaken to improve responses to domestic abuse. This should include monitoring the service delivered to victims of domestic abuse with the development of **service level agreements (SLAs)** or joint action plans.

## **Managing service user consultation**

A domestic abuse forum should include representation by voluntary sector groups providing support, refuge and advocacy to victims of domestic abuse. Police domestic abuse coordinators/supervisors should facilitate the participation of such groups to assist with service user consultation on both multi-agency services and the police response. Any assistance by such groups should be by formal agreement.

Service user consultation should be carried out safely through **independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs)** and voluntary sector service providers. Any new domestic abuse reduction initiative, police or multi-agency, should be examined by service users to establish its viability. Police domestic abuse coordinators/supervisors should also use opportunities within existing consultative structures to obtain user feedback, for example, through crime and disorder audits and strategies, and best value reviews.

## **Providing information for multi-agency public protection arrangements**

Police domestic abuse teams should keep systems for **multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA)** and those responsible for managing sexual and violent offenders and potentially dangerous persons (PDPs) continually updated with information and intelligence on offenders convicted of domestic abuse-related offences. They should also monitor all individuals who are referred into the MAPPA process for domestic abuse-related offending, including providing intelligence on those offenders convicted for other violent or sexual offences or referred to MAPPA because of non-domestic abuse-related concerns.

## **Sharing information with relevant agencies**

Domestic abuse specialists should develop strong links with service providers in other relevant agencies and should **share information** with them according to locally agreed protocols and national standards. Information requests received from other agencies should be monitored by the police domestic abuse coordinator/supervisor. When there is agreement for risk assessments to be shared, domestic abuse specialists should ensure that representatives of other agencies have a common understanding of risk in the context of domestic abuse.

## Multi-agency responses/mechanisms

### Community safety partnerships

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a statutory duty on a number of responsible authorities to work in partnership to reduce crime and disorder. Community safety partnerships (CSPs), formerly known as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships in England, are made up of representatives from the responsible authorities, which are:

- the police
- local authorities
- fire and rescue authorities
- the probation service
- health – clinical commissioning groups (England) or local health boards (Wales)

They work together to protect their local communities from crime, focusing on local issues and priorities. They reassess local crime priorities on a yearly basis and develop community safety plans in consultation with partners and the local community.

### The role of police and crime commissioners

Although police and crime commissioners (PCCs) are not a responsible authority for the purpose of membership of the CSP, they must work together with their local CSP to develop local approaches to reduce and prevent crime.

**Section 10 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011** sets out a flexible framework for partnership working between CSPs and PCCs, allowing for the adoption of locally meaningful arrangements. They must have regard to each other's priorities when developing their respective plans.

## Multi-agency delivery of criminal justice services

Police forces usually have representation at every level of partnership working. The local policing area commander (or equivalent) should represent the force at strategic CSP level and should have responsibility, together with the key strategic partners, for allocating resources and providing the strategic direction to ensure that the CSP strategy is delivered. Officers representing police in partnerships should have a clear understanding of the partnership purpose, processes and structures for delivery and targets.

Monitoring and evaluation play an important role in ensuring the effective delivery of targets in crime and disorder partnership working. For effective monitoring to take place, clear performance criteria need to be set. Once these criteria are agreed, performance can be evaluated against the shared targets. Agencies should ensure that their data are comparable, ideally by using the [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) of domestic abuse, although agencies could collect additional information for their own purposes over and above the multi-agency core data set.

Police performance criteria need to be set by senior police officers, including in a multi-agency context. The criteria should support the force's overall objective when responding to domestic abuse, that is, to make a victim, potential victim and/or their children safer. Senior officers should also regularly scrutinise the performance criteria to ensure that force responses in the context partnership working are achieving the required outcomes.

### Local criminal justice partnerships

Local criminal justice boards (LCJBs) or partnerships manage the criminal justice system at a local level, by joining up local criminal justice agencies to achieve common aims and objectives. They are supported by the [Criminal Justice Board](#) at the national level.

Targets are set at a local level to reduce crime, bring more offences to justice, and increase public confidence in the criminal justice system. Performance against these targets is continually measured and published on a quarterly or yearly basis.

LCJBs should be used by senior officers to monitor criminal justice responses to domestic abuse within agencies that have key responsibilities and targets. LCJBs should oversee [SDVC](#) performance.

### Service level agreements and joint action plans

A service level agreement (SLA) is similar to a contract. In the context of multi-agency working, SLAs can be negotiated agreements or exchanges in terms of the type and quality of service that each agency should expect from the other. They can be used to refer to agreements by voluntary sector agencies to provide a service in return for funding from statutory agencies, or between statutory agencies for the provision of a service in return for a service.

Senior police officers should ensure that SLAs and agency compliance with them are monitored regularly and targets (including timescales) are assessed and amended according to performance. Officers responsible for the development of SLAs between the police and voluntary sector agencies should ensure that police-led initiatives do not place unreasonable demands on these agencies.

Joint action plans can be either on a case basis or as a partnership protocol. They should clearly set out levels of intervention, agreed actions, respective agency responsibilities and the timescales for action. These agreements can be applied internally between police units and/or externally between the police and other relevant agencies.

## Audits

Audits can be used to evaluate the services provided by each agency and to examine barriers that service users might experience with one particular service or a multi-agency service.

Participating agencies should:

- set clear terms of reference for the audit
- agree how the process should be carried out
- consult practitioners working within participating agencies
- consult service users and non-users

In terms of domestic abuse, all partner agencies should fully participate in the audit process to ensure that the data collected is comprehensive and accurately reflects the scale of the problem. Audits should be structured to monitor levels of reporting and indicators of offending, measure the effectiveness of existing domestic abuse service provision and identify any gaps in service provision.

Chief officers of police forces should ensure that processes are in place for the accurate and ethical collection of data relating to domestic abuse which assists in:

- identifying the scale and nature of domestic abuse
- identifying gaps in service provision
- developing the force strategic assessment and local responses to domestic abuse
- measuring the effectiveness of existing service provision

Information on domestic abuse may not be as readily available as for other crime types owing to:

- under-reporting and recording
- lack of data collection (many agencies do not systematically collect information on the number of cases where domestic abuse is an issue)
- the fact that domestic abuse is not a recorded offence type so no separate data is collected
- public surveys – whatever their methodology – not revealing the true extent of domestic abuse because of its personal and hidden character

The nature of domestic abuse means the principles of ‘hot spotting’ are of little value when applied to the policing of domestic abuse. This is because it is difficult to assess reported levels compared with actual levels of offending. Any hot spotting activity only measures reported domestic abuse.

Voluntary sector agencies, such as outreach services and refuge providers, may hold valuable information from victims of domestic abuse who might not contact the police or other statutory service providers. This information could be aggregated to assist in assessing the extent of domestic abuse.

Any service user consultation should prioritise the safety of service users and should be anonymised.

## **Domestic violence/abuse forums**

Local domestic abuse strategies can include a domestic abuse forum or focus group for the purpose of improving performance in how domestic abuse is tackled across the agencies. Such groups should establish clear aims, objectives and plans against which their progress can be assessed. All agencies involved need to have specific domestic abuse policies and procedures that can be coordinated and monitored by forum members.

The main activities of a forum are:

- liaison and networking

- coordinating local services
- developing and improving local service delivery
- coordinating domestic abuse training for agencies
- engaging in public education
- establishing direct services for victims and children
- consulting victims
- review of identified cases
- public education and prevention projects, including perpetrator programmes and work in schools

There is often a rotating chairperson from a range of different agencies. Representatives of statutory agencies should ensure that this does not lead to the marginalisation or exclusion of key voluntary sector groups, as these groups often have particular expertise in the field of domestic abuse. A police-led forum works best when:

- the police do not chair all of the meetings or control the agenda
- the forum does not meet in a police station
- they have dedicated domestic abuse units or specialist officers
- the voluntary sector is fully involved

Each domestic abuse forum should develop:

- a statement of policy
- information for victims of domestic abuse
- a resource pack, including detailed guidance for service deliverers
- training for service deliverers in meeting the needs of victims and holding offenders accountable
- a protocol on information sharing between organisations
- a MARAC process

Monitoring and evaluation can take place as part of the overall community safety plan and strategy, overseen by the CSP together with the PCC.

Evaluation criteria include:

- improvement in safety
- improvement in service provision
- improvement in service use and delivery

- improvement in policy and practice
- service user consultation and satisfaction
- development and adoption of comprehensive domestic abuse strategies

## Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children requires effective local coordination in each area. For this reason, each LA has been required to establish local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA). The MASA is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will cooperate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do. The police, local authority and integrated care board within that local authority must all be covered by a MASA.

Relevant agencies are brought under MASA, including educational establishments, healthcare organisations and voluntary sector organisations which all have a role in safeguarding.

Further information about MASA are set out in the [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 - a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children.](#)

## Safeguarding adults boards

Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs) were set up under the [Care Act 2014 \(the Care Act\) s 43.](#) Each local authority must establish one for its area.

The objective of a SAB is to help and protect adults in its area in cases falling under the [Care Act s 42\(1\)](#), that is, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that an adult in its area (whether or not ordinarily resident there):

- has needs for care and support, whether or not that is provided by the local authority
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and
- as a result of those needs is unable to protect him or herself from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect

The SAB should oversee and lead adult safeguarding in the locality and assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements and partners act to prevent abuse or neglect. It may do anything which appears to it to be necessary or desirable to achieve the objective of helping and protecting adults in the circumstances set out above.

**Schedule 2 of the Care Act** sets out the membership of an SAB. Statutory members are the local authority, a clinical commissioning group and a chief officer of police. If the local authority area covers more than one police force or clinical commissioning group, a single person can represent more than one of either. The SAB can include any other person that the local authority, in consultation with the other statutory members, considers appropriate to ensure it can effectively carry out its duties. The chair and all other representatives appointed to the board must be chosen for their skills and experience.

Under **the Care Act s 44**, where there is reasonable cause for concern about how the SAB, its members or other persons with relevant functions worked together to safeguard an adult in its area with needs for care and support (whether or not met by the local authority)

and either:

- the adult has died and the SAB knows or suspects that the death resulted from serious abuse or neglect (whether or not it knew or suspected this before the adult died)

or

- the adult is still alive and the SAB knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious abuse or neglect

the SAB must initiate a safeguarding adult review (SAR) of the case. It may also arrange for there to be a review of any other case involving an adult in its area with needs for care and support (whether or not met by the local authority).

All members of the SAB, including the police, must cooperate with and contribute to an SAR in order to identify lessons learned and apply them in future cases. The findings from any SARs should be included in the SAB's annual report along with any associated actions or action plan.

For further information see **Department of Health and Social Care: Care and Support Statutory Guidance**

## **Multi-agency public protection arrangements**

The Criminal Justice Act 2003 (ss 325-327B) requires the police, probation and prison services to work jointly as the responsible authority in each area of England and Wales. This is for the purposes of establishing and reviewing arrangements for the assessment and management of risks posed by relevant violent and sexual offenders and potentially dangerous persons.

These arrangements are commonly referred to as MAPPA. The Criminal Justice Act 2003 also requires a range of other agencies to cooperate with the responsible authority in the delivery of the assessment and management of risk, to the extent that it is compatible with their statutory duties. For further details about MAPPA, see [MAPPA Guidance](#).

[MARACs](#) are not part of the MAPPA structure but there should be links between the two systems.

There should be clear lines of communication and contact between MAPPA, public protection units, child abuse investigation units and domestic abuse specialists. Domestic abuse specialists should work with intelligence officers to provide information relating to the domestic abuse offending background of all offenders subjected to a MAPPA process. Domestic abuse and child abuse investigation officers should receive local training on the MAPPA process and the need to refer some domestic abuse offenders.

## **Multi-agency safeguarding hubs**

Multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) are arrangements whereby services are co-located to improve information sharing and respond more effectively to safeguarding needs. They are usually, but not always, focused on the needs of children. Some areas have separate arrangements for sharing information relating to adults, while some have joint units. Other information sharing arrangements exist in some forces under different titles but with similar objectives. The key feature is the effective sharing of information.

See [Home Office \(2014\) Multi Agency Working and Information Sharing Project – Final Report](#) for a review of multi-agency information sharing models, including MASH.

## **Multi-agency risk assessment conferences for domestic abuse**

A MARAC is a meeting where information on the highest-risk domestic abuse cases is shared between representatives of local police, probation services, health, child protection, housing practitioners, IDVAs and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Once the representatives have shared all relevant information they have about a victim, potential risks are

outlined and options are discussed to improve the safety of the victim. These are turned into a coordinated action plan.

The primary focus of the MARAC is to safeguard the adult victim and children, and ultimately address the perpetrator's behaviour. The MARAC also makes links with other forums, including child protection case conferences, to safeguard children and manage perpetrator behaviour.

The underlying principle of MARAC is that no single agency or individual can see the complete picture, but all may have insights that are crucial to the victim's safety. The victim, children or perpetrator do not attend the meeting but the victim is represented by an IDVA who speaks on their behalf.

There are currently over 270 MARACs operating across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland managing more than 64,000 cases a year.

Some [video demonstrations](#) of the MARAC process are available to help understanding.

The core agencies attending MARAC are:

- the police
- the IDVA service
- housing (statutory responsibility)
- children's services (statutory responsibility)
- adult social care
- probation
- health services, for example, primary care trust
- mental health service
- substance misuse service

Other agencies attend where available, for example, education, fire and rescue, ambulance and adult services. Specialist agencies, including those working with Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+), disabled people and male victims, either attend or advise the IDVA service or equivalent advocacy service.

The police role is often to chair the MARAC but also to attend as a representative. All representatives must be able to:

- access relevant information
- make decisions on behalf of their agency, including those relating to allocation of resources

The police representative is, therefore, usually a senior officer with subject matter knowledge, such as an inspector or sergeant from a public protection department. This representation is in addition to the police chair, where there is one.

The police should bring to the MARAC any information which highlights the risks to the victim and children and assists in devising an action plan to minimise those risks. This can include:

- full names and dates of birth of the victim, children and perpetrator
- recent relevant police involvement with the family or individuals concerned
- relevant intelligence about the family and associates
- Police National Computer (PNC) and Police National Database (PND) check results relevant to the family, including warning markers, impending prosecutions and current bail conditions
- any licences such as firearms or door staff
- any specialist skills the offender has
- any disabilities or language difficulties of either party

Actions offered by the police unit will focus on victim safety and managing the perpetrator. This could include actions that divert or disrupt the perpetrator such as covert or overt targeting, reviewing or removing firearms and licences, or other licences, for example, taxi licence. It could be providing a single point of contact to the victim or a joint visit with another agency to review safeguarding or target hardening. In terms of prosecution, it could be to initiate an investigation, review existing investigations, check for breaches of bail or non-molestation orders, apply for a restraining order or have discussions with the CPS to add or review disposal outcomes. In short, it will be important to offer any action which might divert, disrupt or prosecute the perpetrator and safeguard the victim.

Forces should create a MARAC flag on their local system, to be used when a victim is made subject to a MARAC. This is key information for any future risk assessment.

For further information see:

- [Principles of an effective MARAC](#)
- [Toolkit for police officers on the MARAC process](#)

## Specialist domestic violence court systems

Specialist domestic violence court systems (SDVCs), which deal only with domestic abuse cases, operate throughout England and Wales. They provide a coordinated approach to prosecuting domestic abuse cases, and involve the police, prosecutors, court staff, probation and specialist support for the victims.

Where available, [IDVAs](#) or other specialist domestic abuse services attend to provide support to and act as liaison with the victim. Specialist training is provided for police, magistrates, legal advisers and prosecutors. Although the courts are held in existing court buildings, they are set for a fixed day and time when domestic abuse cases are heard in a cluster or they are fast-tracked. Some courts also have separate entrances and waiting areas so that victims do not encounter defendants outside the courtroom.

The 12 core components of SDVCs are:

- multi-agency partnerships with protocols
- multi-agency risk assessment and risk management of victims, perpetrators and children
- identification of cases
- specialist support services
- trained and dedicated criminal justice staff
- court listing considerations
- equality and diversity issues
- performance management
- court facilities
- children's services
- managing perpetrators
- other services (health services, drug and alcohol services and accommodation options)

Detailed information on each of these can be found in the [SDVC Programme Resource Manual, 2nd edition \(2008\)](#).

The police should play an active role in the SDVC system by ensuring that:

- procedures are in place to accurately identify and flag cases as domestic abuse so that they can be properly directed into the SDVC system from the outset

- they collect relevant data (for example, equality data relating to both victims and perpetrators) so that the performance of the SDVC system and its component agencies can be analysed
- custody processes support the system by consistently bailing domestic abuse cases to SDVC lists and imposing appropriate bail conditions
- domestic abuse specialist officers routinely attend SDVC sessions to provide up-to-date information relevant to bail, sentencing, the availability of evidence or other matters that may assist the court, and to facilitate prompt communication with victims, particularly those not supported by an IDVA

## Domestic homicide reviews

Domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) were introduced by the [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 s 9](#) and came into force in April 2011. A DHR is a locally conducted multi-agency review of the death of a person aged 16 or over where it appears the death resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by:

- a person who was related to the victim, or who was or had been in an intimate personal relationship with them
- a member of the same household as the victim

The objective is not to apportion blame but to improve prevention. A multi-agency review allows professionals to understand what happened in each homicide and identify what needs to change to reduce the risk of future homicide.

The police have a statutory responsibility to participate in DHRs. Other agencies with statutory responsibility are:

- local authorities
- local probation services and providers of probation services
- NHS Commissioning Board, NHS trusts and NHS clinical commissioning groups

Other agencies may be involved on a case-by-case basis, including the CPS.

The decision to set up a DHR in any particular case is made by the chair of the CSP, following referral by the police or another agency. The decision should be made within one month of the chair being made aware of the homicide. Where more than one LA area had contact with or knew about the victim, the CSP of the area in which the victim was normally resident should take lead

responsibility. Once the decision is made, the CSP must establish a review panel (RP) comprising representatives from the statutory agencies, including the police, and other agencies relevant to the case. The CSP should also appoint an independent chair not associated with the case.

The RP should complete an overview report (OR) within a further six months of the date of the decision to proceed unless it formally agrees another timetable with the CSP. This is more likely in cases requiring complex review or where criminal proceedings are ongoing. Where a criminal investigation/prosecution is anticipated to run parallel to a DHR, the RP chair must make early contact with the senior investigating officer (SIO) and involve them in finalising the terms of reference for the review to ensure no conflict exists between the two processes.

See [Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews \(DHR Guidance\)](#) for detailed guidance.

#### **Ongoing criminal proceedings – disclosure issues**

Material gathered in the course of a DHR, for example, interviews, documents or case conferences, may be disclosable in criminal proceedings. It is the responsibility of the disclosure officer for those proceedings to communicate with the RP chair to consider such issues. They should refer to the [DHR guidance, s 9](#), for further details.

Each agency is asked to complete an individual management review (IMR). Once it is known that a DHR is being considered, the agency, including the police, should:

- promptly secure its records relating to the case
- draw up a chronology of their involvement with the victim, perpetrator and their families

Where staff or others are interviewed as part of the process:

- written records should be made of the interview, which should be shared with the person
- the interviewer should remind them that the review does not form part of disciplinary proceedings
- the views of the SIO and CPS advice must be sought prior to interviewing witnesses involved in any criminal proceedings

Those conducting IMRs should not have been directly involved with the victim, the perpetrator or either of their families, and should not have been the immediate line manager of any staff involved

in the IMR.

The senior manager who commissioned the IMR report is responsible for its quality assurance and ensuring that recommendations from both the IMR and OR reports are acted on. They are also responsible for managing a feedback and debrief process for staff involved in the review.

The OR brings together and draws overall conclusions from the IMRs and other relevant reports. It should make recommendations for future action feeding into an RP action plan to be agreed at senior level by each agency.

For DHRs to provide effective learning, they must be conducted with the right mindset and followed up by implementing the recommendations contained in the action plan. This means:

- reviews conducted in forces need to emphasise prevention, not blame, to encourage openness, both at individual and force level
- a structure must be established to disseminate the learning across the force
- implementing and ongoing monitoring of the recommended improvements must be the responsibility of senior officers

For further information see:

- [DHR guidance](#), appendices one and two for an outline IMR format and template
- [Domestic Homicide Reviews, Common Themes Identified as Lessons to be Learned](#)

## Tags

Domestic abuse