



# Learning for the police from Domestic Homicide Reviews

This briefing contains learning for strategic and operational police  
practice in England and Wales

Released 2020

This briefing is dedicated to Dr Helen Rawden, Research Assistant at the Vulnerability Knowledge & Practice Programme, who during her life worked to champion the needs of survivors of abuse and contributed significantly to the production of this briefing.

# INTRODUCTION

This briefing is the fifth in a series produced by the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP)<sup>1</sup> aimed at understanding how police practice features in reviews of serious cases. The first four briefings focused on Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) / Child Practice Reviews (CPRs) and Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) / Adult Practice Reviews (APRs), where we developed our approach to drawing out the learning.

Unlike SCRs/CPRs and similar to SARs/APRs, DHRs are not held within a central repository, therefore it is more difficult to map DHR recommendations and identify themes within the wider national dataset. Such a central repository for these types of review may better support cross-boundary learning, with reviews more easily identifiable and more readily available.

In December 2019, we selected 10 unique published Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) to pilot our approach with these types of reviews (Appendix B details how we identified reviews along with an overview of the methodology). While the sample is small and non-representative, our analysis demonstrates that learning can be systematically drawn out from these reviews in a similar way to SCRs/CPRs and SARs/APRs and therefore we can begin to develop a larger dataset to explore themes and key learning points further. Additionally, we will be able to test out the DHR key learning points made within the wider domestic homicide work of the VKPP as our programme expands.

The criteria for the DHRs chosen were that the homicides which triggered the DHRs occurred after the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2016 and there was police engagement or action before the homicide occurred. It is over nine years since DHRs were established on a statutory basis under Section 9 (3) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (Home Office, 2016). A DHR examines the death of a person over 16 years of age which has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by (a) a person to whom they were related or with whom they had been in an intimate personal relationship or (b) a member of the same household as themselves.

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of activity within the police to improve and clarify responses to domestic abuse, stalking and harassment. The learning in this briefing may, therefore, reflect practice that has since advanced in some forces in response to new guidance and toolkits. However, force progress in this area—as in other areas of policing—varies and may still be relevant and evident in some force approaches. This briefing specifically focusses on escalating cases of domestic abuse as a special theme. Each of the cross-cutting themes align with actions in the National Vulnerability Action Plan (Version 2), illustrating the key areas where improvements are still required. Yellow boxes at the end of these sections of the briefing contain a series of reflective practice questions to assist readers in considering how the learning might be applied in their own areas. The briefing also offers links and references to the most up-to-date guidance and learning in domestic abuse, stalking and harassment.

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<sup>1</sup>This programme operates under the auspices of the National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Violence and Public Protection. You can read more about this programme here: <https://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Pages/Vulnerability.aspx>

## Snapshot of cases

### Police forces

Nine police forces are represented in these reviews

### Case types

The 10 cases included four short term rapidly escalating cases and six long term abusive relationships.

### Homicides

Nine homicides were committed by a male partner. Eight of the victims were female, one was male.

The tenth was a suicide by a female. This was deemed to be a domestic homicide due to the enduring, abusive relationship between the victim and (male) perpetrator, both of whom were rough sleepers.

### Features of the cases

The long term relationships were characterised by significant physical harm and mental anguish to the victims.

The short term cases were characterised by high levels of stalking and harassment and consistent mobile phone and social media contact.

Three cases involved alcohol and drug use, including Heroin. In these cases the substance misuse was by both victim and perpetrator.

## SPECIAL THEME

### RAPIDLY ESCALATING DOMESTIC ABUSE

During the review of the 10 cases which met the criteria for this briefing, it became noticeable that we were looking at four cases where the escalation of risk was so rapid as to suggest that they would present their own opportunities for learning. All of the factors below occurred in the rapidly escalating cases, although some can also be identified in the other cases. For interest, the four cases can be read in full by using the links in Appendix A.

#### KEY FACTORS IN RAPIDLY ESCALATING CASES

##### Short period of time between 1st complaint and death

- 4 weeks (6-month relationship)
- 1 month (13-month relationship, abuse escalated on breakup)
- 58 days
- 6 months

##### Mobile phone and social media were key features

- Large volumes of calls and messages
- Other family members messaged
- Intimate pictures used to threaten
- Initial meetings online

##### History of abusing previous partners

In each rapidly escalating case the perpetrator was found to have a history of abusing previous partners.

In each rapidly escalating case **stalking or harassment** was a key characteristic.

**Victims felt that they were wasting police time.** One victim was given a PND for wasting police time, another told 999 call was not urgent.

In three out of the four rapidly escalating cases the victims were young, aged 19 to 24 years, and were **uninformed about DA**

These cases indicate that DA can escalate quickly between couples who are **not co-habiting**. Stalking was an important characteristic which was not always recognised quickly enough by the victim or the police. At times, officers treated the victim as a nuisance and the witness statements of two older partners took precedence over the younger partners' complaints. These individuals had little experience of contacting the police and their families reported that they were uninformed about DA and stalking.

## LEARNING AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE POLICE

The boxes below present the **key learning points** drawn from the DHRs which specifically relate to the special theme of rapidly escalating domestic abuse cases drawn from across the four relevant cases.

The use of technology and social media to facilitate intimate relationships and facilitate abuse was a critical factor in this case. The victim had limited face to-face contact with the perpetrator (approximately 18 weeks), which meant that a highly significant proportion of their relationship and interactions occurred via telephone, text message, email and social media. The abuse through digital media further isolated the victim from support and limited her ability to prevent unwanted contact with the perpetrator (despite the geographical distance between them).

**Awareness of digitally-assisted stalking should be raised with frontline officers and staff.**

Stalking allegations must always be taken seriously and the starting point should always be to ensure that the victim believes that their concerns are being taken seriously. The absence of physical evidence of violence is an insufficient reason to grade the risk as 'standard' or 'medium'; coercive control and jealous surveillance are far more reliable risk indicators as research has identified (Stark, 2009).

**The research evidence suggests that the time given by stalkers to their activities are indicative of obsessive and fixated behaviours and therefore should be a consideration in any assessment of risk (Monkton-Smith et al., 2017).**

The end of a relationship can be an event that results in the start or escalation of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment.

Physical violence is not the only precursor to domestic homicide. Social media has become a method of stalking and harassment, which can result in coercion and control even if the victim and perpetrator do not meet or speak to each other.

**Police should not assume that separation will reduce risk. Consider all information including whether continuing contact is happening and whether this could constitute stalking and/or coercive control.**

During the investigation, the victim, like other victims before her, had her mobile phone seized for evidential reasons. Whilst this is necessary it immediately renders the victim without a means of communication and vulnerable because of that.

**Where phones or other mobile devices are seized for investigation, police should acknowledge the implications to victims and ensure a safeguarding plan is in place to address this.**

## Cross cutting themes

### Identification and management of risk



Risk identification and onward information sharing must be underpinned by accurate recording of key information on safeguarding reports/ referrals, police systems and risk assessments.

*Is there a process in place to audit or review accuracy and completion of forms and systems, and are officers encouraged to update these with new and/or accurate information?*

#### NVAP ACTION 2.24

##### Officer norms

This NVAP action recognises that officers' adherence to expectations and thresholds of acceptability may change with exposure to aspects of criminality/ vulnerability. It may be suggested that within this sample of DHRs, officer norms are influenced by the ways in which some victims of domestic abuse present. Officer norms may be particularly influenced by victims who appear chaotic, are sometimes violent and abuse substances—any assumptions impact on the identification and management of risk.

In one case, officers' decision-making was clouded by the frequency of call outs (22 over a 6 year relationship), the fact that *alcohol/ drugs* were often part of the context for both parties in the relationship, the *volatile behaviour* of the female subject of the DHR, and, at times, a *lack of clarity over who was the aggressor*. The complexity of this case is apparent, and resulted in under-recording and/ or downgrading of risk (9 incidents were not risk assessed, 9 were graded as standard, 3 were graded as medium and only 1 as high—which did not trigger a MARAC referral). Only 4 referrals for support were made over the 6 years, with referrals diminishing over time. Most importantly, however, the victim remained vulnerable to harm despite the way she presented to officers.

In a second case, officers' decision-making was similarly hampered by perceptions of the male victim's chaotic lifestyle, underpinned by mental health needs and substance abuse. Officers furthermore made decisions based on the nature of the relationship presented. A first report that the victim was assaulted by someone he had a 'one night stand' with was treated as domestic abuse, but subsequent reports suggest police did not consider a one-night stand to constitute an 'intimate relationship'. The DS disputed a MARAC referral made by an IDVA that the victim's risk was 'high', instead attributing the violence to 'minor disagreements between heavy drinkers' (despite not having seen the referral himself). Police continued to view the victim's vulnerability as self-inflicted, overlooking his reports of being frightened, and as a result, took no further action nor offered any supportive referrals.

Guidance on risk assessment and risk models relating to stalking and harassment can be found in Annex A of *Stalking or harassment: Advice on effective investigation*, accessed via the 'Advice for investigators' link [here](#).

You can find a flowchart for responding to reports of stalking and harassment [here](#).

- ◆ Are officers trained to appropriately identify vulnerabilities associated with domestic abuse? Are officers' norms addressed within training and supervision in relation to evident vulnerabilities of victims making reports? There has been some promising progress in this area, with [DA Matters training introduced through SafeLives](#) which covers a lot about recognising coercive and controlling behaviour and the [piloting of a new domestic abuse risk assessment tool](#).
- ◆ Are domestic crime and non-crime cases being recorded in line with national crime recording standards (NCRS)? Is there a process in place to ensure DA incidents are not closed until a supervisor has reviewed the incident to determine if the appropriate crime has been recorded? Although this point concerns ensuring correct classification of crime, it is important to note that by looking at the 'incident' in silo can create adverse decisions, the non-crime may be part of a series of reported incidents that indicate a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, understanding the history and context of the case is equally as important.
- ◆ Are officers aware that people who need support should be referred even if no offences are apparent? A list of national organisations supporting victims and professionals on issues of stalking and harassment can be found at Annex B of *Stalking or harassment: Advice on effective investigation*, accessed via the 'Advice for investigators' link [here](#).
- ◆ Are officers aware that they can consider a MARAC referral even if it does not fit the criteria if, in their professional judgement, it should be referred?
- ◆ Are supervisors aware that they should not act as gatekeepers, all high risk cases must be referred to the MARAC coordinator and any decision to downgrade a case should be justified and rationale recorded?
- ◆ Are officers aware of the College of Policing guidance [on determining the primary perpetrator and dealing with counter-allegations](#)?

## Cross cutting themes

### Identification and management of risk



#### NVAP ACTION 2.11

#### Recognition and response

The objectives under this NVAP action include ensuring staff are equipped to identify and manage risk and safeguard those requiring it. Analysis of DHRs, therefore, assessed the extent to which the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) was completed and utilised effectively. We also looked at practice around MARAC referrals.

#### Risk assessment

There was mixed practice in respect of the DASH across the 10 DHRs analysed for this briefing. In 30% of cases, the DASH appeared to be completed where it should have been, completed accurately and appropriate safeguarding referrals made either to relevant partners or to MARAC. Inconsistent practice was evident across the remaining 70% of cases. In these cases:

- ◆ the DASH was not always completed for each incident. This tended to be the case where there were many repeat call outs to domestic incidents and officers incorrectly identified and recorded the incidents as 'non-crime' domestic incidents. Officer norms frequently played a role in misidentification of domestic abuse (see previous section).
- ◆ Recording and completion of DASH risk assessments was sometimes inadequate in these cases. DHR reviewers could not always identify records of outcomes of assessments; and the DASH was sometimes missing crucial information about relevant children.
- ◆ Relevant questions on the DASH were not asked in one case of stalking, where officers did not recognise stalking behaviours.
- ◆ DASH assessments were not always reviewed and updated following additional contacts with victims. In one case, after additional phone contact with the victim, police completed a second DASH Risk Indicator Checklist by populating it with the same responses from the first Checklist. This means no formal risk assessment was undertaken on the victim's last contact with police.
- ◆ Additional checks on PNC and PND were not always carried out to further inform the risk assessment.
- ◆ A new domestic abuse risk assessment tool has been piloted across several forces, the evaluation of this new tool can be found [here](#).

#### Risk management

- ◆ Appropriate follow-on support referrals were not always made following DASH completion. This tended to be the case where domestic abuse incidents were incorrectly recorded as a 'non-crime' domestic incident. Even where officers mis-identified incidents as 'non-crime' domestic incidents, referrals for support could be made. Support referrals were also not made on occasions where no children were involved.
- ◆ While in several cases police appropriately referred victims to MARAC (in some cases on the basis of professional judgement rather than threshold criteria), there were also examples where MARAC referrals were not made despite the threshold being met. Non-referral to MARAC was influenced in these reviews by: mis-identification of domestic abuse; officer norms clouding identification of risk; failure to recognise stalking behaviours; poor recording of risk; and confusion over whose responsibility it is for making referral.
- ◆ It is important that forces engage in the multi-agency agenda to ensure robust risk management, especially within situations where police are responding to repeat calls for service.
- ◆ Where prioritising the voice of the victim, this should be balanced by public protection responsibilities. As in one case, officers asked the victim what she wanted, and only acted on her wishes. This was insufficient to protect the victim, who was not in possession of all the facts and was unaware of all the options available.
- ◆ Inappropriate use of Police Information Notices (PINs). This option was used by officers who did not recognise the risk to the victim of stalking. The joint HMIC and HMICPSI inspection report '[Living in Fear](#)' (2017) identified PINs as ineffective. The College of Policing and NPCC subsequently advised they should no longer be used.



Call handlers form an important doorway into the police service, and assess risk of incoming calls so they can be deployed appropriately. Call handlers must be trained and supported in identifying stalking and domestic abuse.



- ◆ Are officers able to appropriately recognise domestic abuse incidents as such, and are they recording incidents correctly? Are officers adequately trained to recognise and risk assess stalking appropriately? Stalking and harassment risk assessment tools are listed in Annex A of *Stalking or harassment: Advice on effective investigation*, accessed via the 'Advice for investigators' link [here](#).
- ◆ Is there robust supervision and oversight in place to review all domestic incidents?
- ◆ How is the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist quality assured in your force?
- ◆ Are officers effectively applying professional curiosity to ensure cases are escalated appropriately?
- ◆ Are officers aware they are able to make supportive referrals in the context of 'no-crime' domestic incidents, and in cases where no children are involved?
- ◆ Has your force stopped using Police Information Notices to manage offender behaviour?

## Cross cutting themes

### Victim engagement and care



"The family said that the failure of the police to attend...was very distressing for Sarah. She "locked herself away" and felt increasingly vulnerable. Her family saw how terrified Sarah became of Kevin. Sarah's elder son felt that she had a moment of clarity regarding Kevin and her son asked her to call the police again. Sarah told him that she couldn't, saying "they don't listen" and that "she was so tired." Her elder son...phoned the police on her behalf. When he rang, the elder son described how his mum had been let down by the police and said he told the police that Kevin was "going to kill my mum and kill himself."

#### NVAP ACTION 2.71

#### Working with communities to build confidence and increase reporting

Across nine of the DHRs, we found that victims were reluctant to report domestic abuse to the police. Sometimes the reluctance pre-dated police involvement, while in other cases, police responses influenced future reporting and engagement.

*Nature of the relationship between the victim subject to DHR and perpetrator.* These relationships can be complex and underpin a victim's resistance to report DA to the police. Relationships between victims and suspects may be rooted in economic and/or emotional dependency (as was the case in one of the DHRs included here), or, as in another DHR, they reflected deeply intertwined familial relationships. In both cases, the victims' ability to report and/or support the case was undermined.

*Threats (veiled or overt) from the perpetrator* were common in these DHRs which frightened victims and controlled their behaviours.

*Lack of previous involvement with the police* Inexperience with the police may negatively influence victims' willingness to report stalking and harassment at early stages, as was evident in one review. This highlights the importance of raising awareness of this issue widely in the community and encouraging victims, their friends and family to report incidents early.

*The influence of cultural frameworks on perceptions of DA and police involvement.* Two cases highlighted the significance of culture in shaping victims' views of abuse and their engagement with the police. One victim (having moved to the UK from her home country) appeared to be influenced by rigid gender roles and this informed her reluctance to report DA. In another case, the victim's close ties with her home country (where two of her children resided) played a role in her response to domestic abuse. There was little evidence in both of these cases that *any partner agency* involved fully considered these cultural influences, except for attention to a language barrier in one case.

*Lack, or loss, of confidence in the police response.* In three cases, there was evidence that victims lacked—or lost—confidence in the police response, preventing them from reporting or remaining engaged in the case. In one case, a significantly delayed response influenced the victim's propensity to later report incidents, as evidenced in the quote to the left. In another case the victim's case was closed due to insufficient evidence which may have sent the message to the victim that it was not worth reporting unless she had 'proof'. These cases highlight just how important swift responses by the police are, and how engagement and sensitive communication with victims is essential to gain their confidence.

**The College of Policing are learning about the ways that police forces have communicated with victims of DA during the pandemic and will look to evaluate the effectiveness of their use of web platforms to do so.**

- 
- ◆ Are officers making every effort to increase the confidence of victims in reporting crime to them?
  - ◆ Do officers have an understanding of how to best provide support to victims of domestic abuse?
  - ◆ Are officers raising awareness of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment with potential victims and providing appropriate and corresponding safety advice?
  - ◆ Are officers raising awareness of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment to family and friends, and where and how family and friends can make reports or ask for advice?
  - ◆ Are forces engaging with the wider community to raise awareness of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment and providing clear mechanisms for community members to report concerns about others?
  - ◆ Are officers equipped to consider wider social and cultural contexts that may inform victim's views of the abuse and violence they experience, as well as the ways in which victims may choose to engage or not with institutions such as the police?
  - ◆ Are forces promoting and signposting local specialist support services, such as IDVAs for example?

## Cross cutting themes

### Victim engagement and care



#### NVAP ACTION 2.71

#### Working with communities to build confidence and increase reporting

Additional ways that police can build confidence in victims and improve their experiences through the criminal justice system is to ensure victims are equipped to remain safe during an investigation and to follow through with commitments made to victims.

#### Ensuring communication needs are met

It is not unusual for police to seize mobile phones from victims and perpetrators as part of evidence-gathering during an investigation. Doing so assists the police in gaining a full picture of the threat posed by a perpetrator. However, doing so without arranging a replacement phone can leave victims without safe methods of contacting others and can hamper the police and supportive services from making contact safely with the victim. In one case, a victim's phone was seized as part of an investigation. She had been assessed as high risk, yet no replacement phone was arranged for her. As a result, she was unable to safely and quickly contact family and friends, and was unable to be contacted by a domestic abuse service who was supporting her. Police themselves were unable to contact her to advise her of bail conditions imposed on the perpetrator. [College of Policing APP guidance](#) suggests that 'Where it is proportionate and necessary to seize a victim's mobile phone (with consent) and this is the only source of contact with emergency services for the victim, consideration must be given to the provision of a replacement mobile phone pending completion of forensic inspection'. Since 2017 the force highlighted above has formed a partnership with Vodafone charity TecSOS to provide victims of DA with an emergency phone.

#### Recovery of property

The [College of Policing APP guidance](#) states that "*Victims intending to recover property from a residence should be offered assistance to ensure that this process can be carried out safely*". Systems for facilitating this support, however, need to be robust, clear and following through on commitments made upheld. In one case, the victim made a request for police to accompany her in retrieving her property. However, because the property had been left outside, it appears the police were uncertain if they needed to attend. Attempts to contact the victim to clarify this went unanswered, and the request went unactioned. Victims are likely to be as frightened and distressed when property is left outside the home as when it is inside the home, and their safety is not assured simply because they do not have to enter the house to collect their belongings.

#### Ensuring initial call handler responses to domestic abuse victims are effective

In one case, the victim dialled 999 to report that the perpetrator was sending her messages via Facebook and text. She was informed that this was not a 999 emergency and that she should call back on 101. The victim responded that she had done this weeks before and no one had called her back. This related to a call that was rated as high (immediate response) and because the victim did not answer the phone, arrangements were made for a home visit, but the visit was never made. There is no explanation for what went wrong on these occasions. The DHR reviewer noted that when a caller to 999 is told that their call is not an emergency, the caller should be transferred to 101 rather than being asked to re-dial, as there is no guarantee that the caller will ring back. Another case involved a caller dialling 101, and remaining on hold for 6 minutes and 43 seconds. She was unable to report her concerns about the perpetrator's behaviour. In both cases, victim confidence in the police was undermined.

- ◆ Do forces have established procedures in place for ensuring victims of domestic abuse are able to receive replacement phones when their own has been seized as evidence?
- ◆ Do officers consider the use of personal safety devices/handsets to prioritise emergency calls for victims?
- ◆ Are officers aware of their responsibilities in accompanying victims to retrieve their property—whether or not the property is inside or outside of the residence?
- ◆ Are there procedures in place to ensure that 'non-emergency' domestic abuse reports received by call handlers are effectively transferred to 101?

[College of Policing APP guidance on Victim Safety and Support](#) provides further information on safety planning for victims of domestic abuse.



# Cross cutting themes

## Evidence and investigation



### NVAP ACTION 2.42

#### Evidence and investigation

This NVAP action is aimed at ensuring call handlers are prepared to recognise risk, ensure good quality information is recorded and ensure supervisors have the skills to review and manage investigations.

While there is no specific legal definition of *stalking* the police and CPS have adopted the following description:

*“a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behaviour which is intrusive. It can include harassment that amounts to stalking or stalking that causes fear of violence or serious alarm or distress in the victim.”*

Consider the stalking mnemonic FOUR. Are the behaviours:

- Fixated
- Obsessive
- Unwanted
- Repeated

The Joint NPCC and CPS ***Stalking or Harassment Evidence Checklist*** can be found [here](#)



#### Call handlers and officers preparedness to identify vulnerability: Stalking and harassment

Stalking and harassment proved problematic for both call handlers and investigators to identify in one example. From initial contact with call handlers to the investigating officers, the perpetrator’s behaviours, and actions were not identified, recorded or investigated as stalking. The risk to the victim was poorly understood, leading to inappropriate risk management. Underpinning this was an absence of a national definition of stalking, one of the key findings of a joint HMIC and HMICPSI inspection [Living in Fear](#) which cited this as a primary reason why forces respond inconsistently and use varying interpretations of stalking. This was evidenced by the officers involved, who struggled to determine differences in behaviours associated with stalking and harassment.

#### Management of investigations

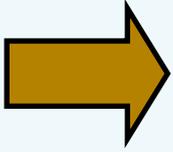
Protracted disputes over responsibility for an investigation can undermine the safety of DA victim and/or their children. In one DHR, two boroughs disputed responsibility for a case citing Home Office Counting rules. The case bounced between the two localities, and an OIC was not allocated for 27 calendar days as a result. This impacted on the case in a number of ways: (1) management of risk (a suspect not arrested despite sufficient evidence that a crime had been committed); (2) opportunities to enforce a Non-Molestation Order (when there was evidence of a breach); (3) these, in turn, leading to reduced victim confidence in the police; and (4) limited partnership working between the police and DA specialist support.

#### Evidence-led prosecutions

Evidence-led prosecutions were considered in only two cases. Neither was successful. In one case this was because the victim continued to maintain a relationship with her partner at the time who was in breach of bail conditions to stay away from her. The reviewer noted, however, that there was good attempt by the police to engage with the victim and support her involvement. In the other case, an evidence-led prosecution was considered, but ultimately discounted as police felt the victim had fabricated at least some of her story (the victim in fact told them she had fabricated it). The wider context of this case is one in which officers repeatedly responded to calls, influencing their reluctance to view the victim sympathetically, raising the question as to whether an evidence-led prosecution could have been possible with better investigation. [College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice](#) provides more information on evidence-led prosecution. Also see the [HMICFRS and HMICPSI joint report on evidence-led DA cases](#).

- ◆ Despite an absence of a national definition of stalking, are call handlers and officers equipped to recognise perpetrator behaviours and victims’ needs? The College of Policing have produced a range of advice on stalking and harassment that may be of assistance. This includes advice for supervisors, managers and senior leaders; investigators; police responders and call takers which can all be accessed [here](#).
- ◆ Is there a process in place for supervisors to swiftly resolve responsibility for investigations when this is in dispute?
- ◆ Are evidence-led prosecutions consistently considered in cases of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment?
- ◆ Are officers supported to deploy professional curiosity in early phases of the investigation to maximise opportunities to gather evidence that may be used in evidence-led prosecutions?
- ◆ Do staff understand the new Stalking Protection Orders? Are these being used appropriately? Further information and guidance on stalking and Stalking Protection Orders can be found [here](#).
- ◆ Are staff considering [domestic violence protection notices \(DVPN\) and domestic violence protection orders \(DVPO\)](#) at an early stage following a domestic abuse incident as part of their duty to take or initiate steps to make a victim as safe as possible?

## Next steps



This is the final briefing in this series produced by the VKPP. A meta-analysis considering findings from across all reviews will be released in Winter 2020. We will be considering the challenges and benefits from learning from reviews in this way, and make recommendations for future projects that can help the police learn more quickly and comprehensively from statutory reviews.



We also encourage feedback about the briefing from forces about both content and style. Please click [here](#) to complete a brief survey where you can provide your feedback, or, if you would like to be in touch, please e-mail [vkpp@norfolk.pnn.police.uk](mailto:vkpp@norfolk.pnn.police.uk).

## APPENDIX A:

### SAMPLE OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS AND RELATED THEMES

| Case review title and link to DHR | Review focus  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <a href="#">Sophia</a>            | Domestic Homicide by ex-partner of female aged 33, mother of two children.  |
| <a href="#">Alice Ruggles</a>     | Rapidly escalating case.<br>Domestic Homicide by the boyfriend of a 26-year-old female. He was a member of the armed forces and they met online.  |
| <a href="#">Alina</a>             | Rapidly escalating case.<br>Domestic Homicide by the married boyfriend of a 19-year-old female.   |
| <a href="#">Maggie</a>            | Suicide of a rough sleeping female in her 40's. The case was classified as domestic homicide due to years of abuse.   |
| <a href="#">Heidi</a>             | Domestic Homicide by 24-year-old female's uncle with whom she was in an incestuous relationship. Care leaver, non-recent SA and CSE.  |
| <a href="#">Jason</a>             | Domestic Homicide of 51-year-old male by another male—their relationship was unclear. Possible victim of cuckooing.   |
| <a href="#">Karen</a>             | Hungarian couple, two children. Female victim of Domestic Homicide on perpetrator's release from prison. Possible modern slavery by husband who forced the victim to work for his gain.                                     |
| <a href="#">Nargiza</a>           | Female aged 29 years, two children, ethnically described as from a Central Asian Republic. Domestic Homicide committed by husband. Possible modern slavery by husband who sent children away so that the victim could work. |
| <a href="#">Rosemary</a>          | Rapidly escalating case<br>Female aged 23, victim of stalking and harassment resulting in domestic homicide.  |
| <a href="#">Sarah</a>             | Rapidly escalating case.<br>Female, adult children. Non-recent abuse. Domestic Homicide by married male who she was in a relationship with. Male had history of DA.   |

## APPENDIX B: OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY

### ***Identifying Serious Case Reviews for inclusion***

This briefing is based on a small, non-representative sample of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs). This sample was selected to test our existing template of reviewing reviews for police practice. Searches of Community Safety Partnership websites revealed eight suitable DHRs and one was provided to us by the staff officer of the Domestic Abuse portfolio. A third sector domestic abuse organization Standing Together provided one case. The selected DHRs were published between 2017 and 2018.

### ***Inclusion criteria***

Cases were included where they fit the following criteria:

- ⇒ The incident that triggered the DHR occurred on or after January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.
- ⇒ Police were involved with the victim in the timeline of the review.
- ⇒ There is explicit reference to police practice within the review; this could be either omissions in practice or good practice identified.

DHRs were excluded from this analysis where:

- \* The incident that triggered the DHR occurred prior to January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.
- \* Police were not involved in the case at all.
- \* Police were only involved in investigation after the incident, and no detail about police practice within the investigation was identified.
- \* No learning was identified by the reviewer in relation to police practice.

### ***Limitations of reviews***

The DHRs examined do not always go into great detail about the policing role in these types of cases. It may be possible to know, for example, that risk assessments were not of the quality expected, but it is not always possible to know why. Future Domestic Homicide Reviews of this sort would benefit from reviewer's attention to the reasons why police practice did not meet expected standards. This would assist in increasing the relevance of learning from these reviews for the Police. Some of the themes highlighted in this briefing were not routinely identified by the DH reviewers but were identified from within the DHRs as common themes of interest to police learning by the briefing reviewer. Readers may be interested in a news article written by a member of the VKPP team about our experiences in analyzing reviews for police practice. You can access it [here](#).