

## How to contact and refer to the National Homicide Service

All Chairs can contact the National Homicide Service to discuss any potential referrals. Please contact Gemma Snowball on:

**DHRenquiries@victimsupport.org.uk**

Where the family agrees to a referral, please forward the family's contact details using a secure method via:

**Email: [hssupport@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:hssupport@victimsupport.org.uk)**

**Telephone: 0300 303 1984**

We are an independent charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

For information and support, contact us by:

- calling: Supportline **08 08 16 89 111**
- using Next Generation Text (add **18001** before any of our phone numbers)
- Online: **victimsupport.org.uk**

To find out how you can help us, visit **[victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved](https://victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved)**



# DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS:

## Support for families and the role of the National Homicide Service

Guide for Review Chairs

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## Introduction

This guidance provides information for Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Chairs on the role of the National Homicide Service. It outlines the range of support and services we offer, and our role in supporting and advocating for those bereaved through domestic homicide, including DHRs.

## Who is Victim Support?

The National Homicide Service is managed by Victim Support (VS) which is a national charity supporting victims and witnesses of crime. The National Homicide Service was set up in 2010 specifically to support families bereaved by homicide across England and Wales which is funded by the Ministry of Justice.

## What is our involvement in DHRs?

VS is involved in all aspects of the DHR process. The core VS services frequently sit on DHR panels as domestic abuse specialist experts for DHRs regardless of if our service has had previous contact with any involve parties.

The National Homicide Service provides practical and emotional support for families bereaved by homicide. 94% of all families bereaved by homicide, including domestic homicides, consent to support from the National Homicide Service and are referred to Caseworkers located across England and Wales. Referrals are made by their police Family Liaison Officer (FLO), or they can be referred to the service by other routes, including the Chair of a DHR. Caseworkers will also discuss onward referrals to Hundred Families and Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA).

VS is also a member of the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel and uses the learning from this role to ensure that we continually improve our ability to advocate for families in the DHR process.

## Benefits of referring to us

The bereaved family have an important role to play in shaping a DHR. Section 6 of the Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of DHRs recognises the value of the families contributions to the learning of statutory reviews and calls on chairs to ensure families are given opportunities to be integral to reviews.

The Homicide Service can help to enhance the relationship between chairs and families to ensure compliance with this guidance and improve outcomes.

## What does this support look like in practice?

- Facilitate initial contact between chair and family
- Explain DHR process
- Identify families wishes and act as primary contact where requested
- Ensure family are updated throughout duration of review
- Ensure victims voice is represented
- Obtaining pseudonyms and pen portraits
- Presence at family interviews
- Read through draft report with families
- Support around publication
- Support for whole duration of DHR

Paragraph 56a of the DHR statutory guidance sets out that at the first meeting with the family the chair should offer signposting to specialist and expert advocacy support services to families who do not have a designated advocate. The Home Office guidance states that a specialist advocate should be offered to the bereaved and that where possible this should be someone with an existing working relationship with the family.

## The role of the National Homicide Service

### Needs assessment and support plan:

Caseworkers are experts in supporting and advocating for those bereaved through homicide. The Caseworker undertakes a full needs assessment with each bereaved family and can provide support on a wide range of needs including advocacy for DHRs, emotional support, access to children and/or adults therapy for trauma and bereavement; help with immediate and practical needs such as assisting with the funeral arrangements, employment or housing issues as well as advocacy with an extensive range of agencies. Caseworkers also support families to navigate their way through the complexities of the criminal justice system.

### Specialist support and advocacy through DHRs:

Caseworkers support bereaved families for an average of two years (in a domestic homicide we will not close a case until the DHR process is completed and so this may be longer). They build trusting relationships with families and are experienced advocates and therefore well placed to provide advocacy. Caseworkers ensure that the victims' voice is heard throughout the process and that their family is able to represent their views and opinions. Caseworkers can attend meetings with the chair and the family, and navigate the family through the DHR, including reviewing the report with them.

### Supporting the wishes of the family:

Caseworkers will support the decisions and wishes of the family. If the family decline the offer of advocacy support, for example because they are not ready to consider any involvement at that time, we will support that decision.

Where appropriate we will revisit the offer of advocacy support as a family's needs and wishes change. We can, with the family's permission, liaise with the chair to keep updated on the progress of the DHR even if they do not want to be directly involved.