

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**

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Victim Support, 1 Bridge Street, Derby, DE1 3HZ
Telephone: 020 7268 0200

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DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS:

The role of the National Homicide Service

Guide for professionals

April 2021

Introduction

This guidance provides additional information for professionals involved in the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process, 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. 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.

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 self-referrals. Caseworkers will also discuss onward referrals to Hundred Families and Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA).

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 throughout 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.

Benefits of referring to us

Bereaved families have an important role to play in shaping DHRs. 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. The Homicide Service can help to enhance the relationship between chairs, CSPs and families to ensure compliance with this guidance and improve outcomes.

In order to ensure families are engaged in the DHR process from the beginning it is important to ensure that families are referred to specialist support as early as possible. Families who are offered support at the earliest point in DHRs are much more likely to engage with the review process. By ensuring engagement early on families are able to participate in a meaningful way with the review process.

How to contact and refer to the National Homicide Service

All professionals 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

Tel: 0300 303 1984