



Guidance for Domestic Homicide Review chairs - support for families

Introduction

Families bereaved by a domestic homicide or by a suicide where domestic abuse was involved will have a wide range of support needs. Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) chairs have an important role to play in ensuring that families are signposted/referred to appropriate available support services.

This guidance provides additional information to DHR chairs on the support available to families and how to provide appropriate, coordinated signposting/referral to those services.

Specialist advocacy support

As set out in Section 6 of the [Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews](#), the DHR chair/review panel should ensure that families are given the opportunity to be integral to reviews. Families' involvement in the review can be supported by advocacy services. Paragraph 56 a) 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.

Specialist advocates can guide families through DHRs and other inquiries including Serious Case Reviews, Inquests, Mental Health Reviews, and Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) inquiries.

Where DHR Chairs want to make referrals to advocacy and support services for families bereaved by murder and manslaughter these should be made through the National Homicide Service.

National Homicide Service

Chairs should first check whether families bereaved by domestic homicide are being supported by the [National Homicide Service](#), which is funded by Government to provide a wide range of support and advocacy for those bereaved through murder/manslaughter for as long as this is needed, regardless of whether they choose to engage with the DHR or not.

Families who have been bereaved by a homicide are offered a referral to the National Homicide Service by their police family liaison officer, or they can be



referred into the Service by other routes. A referral to the Service can be made by the Chair, with the family's permission, by sending the family's contact details using a secure method via:

Email: hssupport@victimsupport.org.uk

Phone: 0300 303 1984

What the National Homicide Service will do

Following a needs assessment, the Caseworker will explain the support they can provide and invite the family to decide whether they want to be involved with the DHR and if so how they would like to be supported, if at all.

The Homicide Service will explain the purpose and benefits of advocacy support. They will explain which organisations can provide support and specialist advocacy and will provide information on all services:

- [Victim Support](#) (Homicide Service),
- [AAFDA](#) (Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse)
- [One Hundred Families](#).

Families can then choose how advocacy support is provided to them and by whom and the Homicide Service Caseworker will either refer to AAFDA/One Hundred Families or provide this support themselves, depending on the wishes of the family.

Families may also, of course, decide to decline the offer of advocacy support. This may be because they do not wish to be involved in the DHR or other inquiries or may not be ready to consider involvement in inquiries at that time. It may, therefore, be appropriate for the Homicide Service Caseworker and Chair to re-visit the offer of advocacy support as a family's needs and understandings change. The Chair will need to liaise with the Homicide Service Caseworker directly (where it has been they are providing support) to ensure the client is being updated and being offered this support throughout the case as appropriate.

Families bereaved by suicide

The Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews requires that where a victim took their own life and it emerges that there was domestic abuse, a DHR should be undertaken.



However, where there is no criminal conviction, it is outside of the remit of the Homicide Service to support families in these circumstances.

In these cases, where the family agrees, a referral can be made to AAFDA by forwarding the family's contact details using a secure method to AAFDA via:

Email: info@aafda.org.uk

Phone: 07768 386922

DHR chairs can also provide signposting to local support services - a directory of local services is available at <http://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/local-services/>.

Information for families and friends bereaved by suicide is available in the '[Help is at Hand](#)' guide.

The Home Office recognises that conducting a DHR in the case of a suicide can have additional complexities and sensitivities and we are therefore keen to strengthen the statutory guidance on this issue. We are also looking at how we can improve provision of support available for families.

If you can have questions or comments please contact dhrenquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk