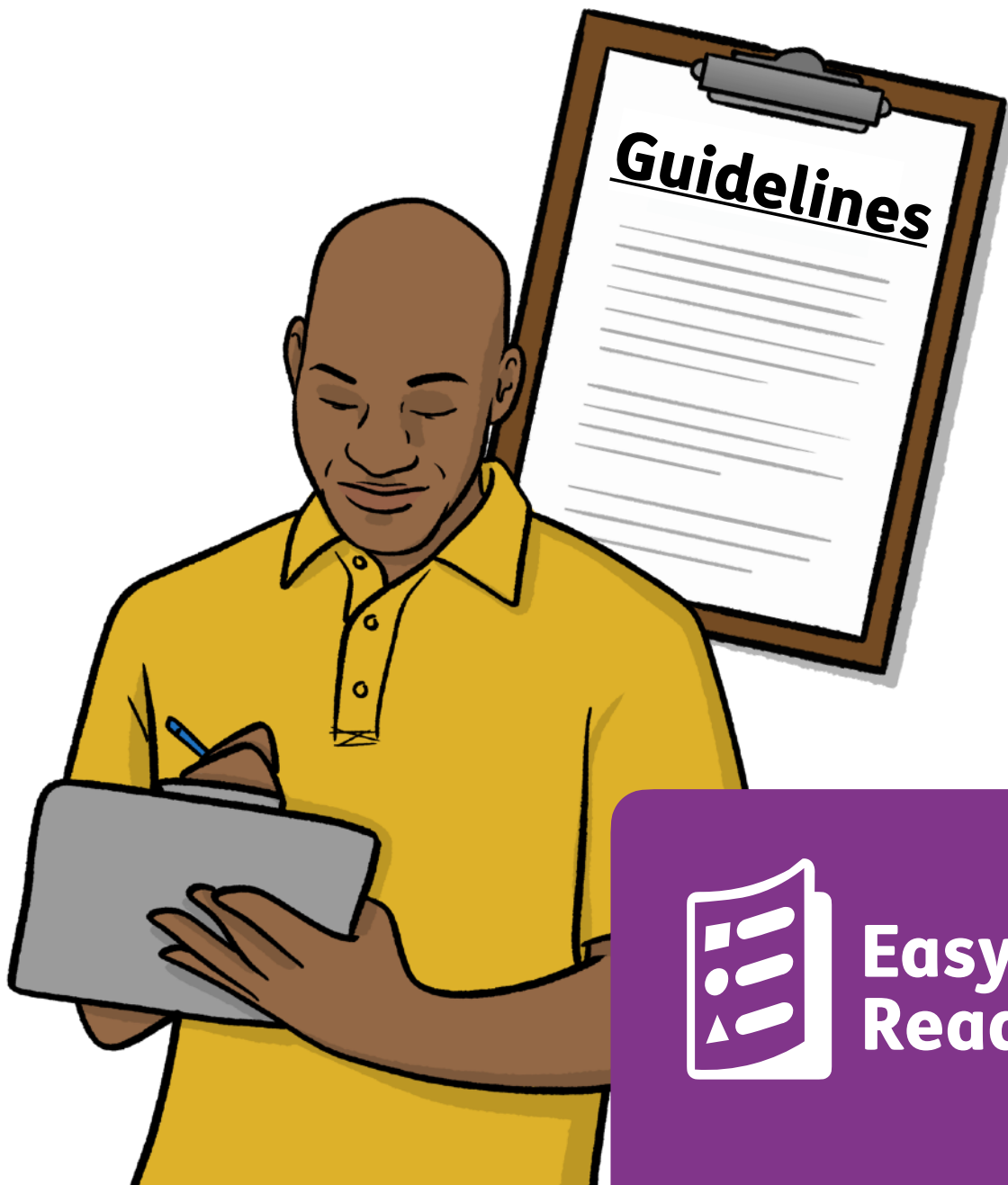




Home Office

Domestic Homicide Review guidelines



Easy
Read

Easy Read



This is an Easy Read version of some information. It may not include all of the information but it will tell you about the important parts.



This Easy Read booklet uses easier words and pictures. Some people may still want help to read it.



Blue and underlined words show links to websites and email addresses. You can click on these links on a computer.

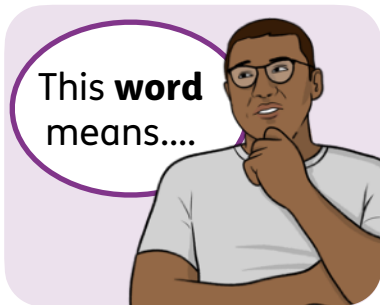
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Words we use



This is a list of important words that we use in this booklet.



You may not know what they mean. So after each word, we have explained what it means.



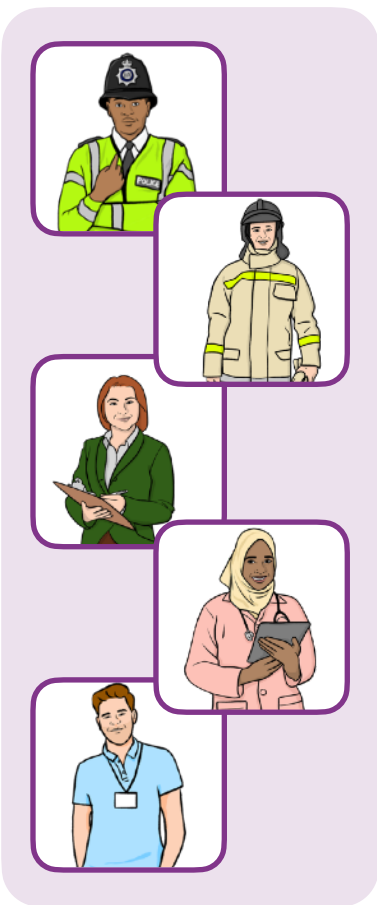
If you ever forget what a word means, you can come back to this list.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP)



A **Community Safety Partnership (CSP)** is what we call a group of local services working together to keep people in a local area safe. A CSP includes:

- Police services.
- Fire services.
- Local councils.
- Healthcare Services.
- Probation Services - these are services that check on and support people who have been charged with a crime but do not have to go to prison.



There are over 300 CSPs in England and Wales.

Domestic abuse



Domestic abuse is when someone is harmed by a person they are **personally connected** to.

Personally connected can mean:



- They are, or were, married to the person.



- They are, or were, in a **civil partnership** with the person.

A **civil partnership** is a way of making your relationship legal without being married.



- They had agreed to marry or be in a civil partnership with the person.

Personally connected can also mean:



- They are, or were, in a romantic relationship with the person.



- They are parents to a child with the person or have been in charge of looking after a child with the person.



- They are a family member of the person.



Domestic abuse is not always physical and violent.

Domestic abuse can also include:



- Sexual abuse.



- Controlling how someone behaves.



- Making someone feel bad and saying bad things about them.



- Controlling a person's money.



This is how a law called the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act describes domestic abuse.

Domestic Abuse Commissioner



The **Domestic Abuse Commissioner** is the person in charge of helping the UK Government stop domestic abuse from happening.

Domestic homicide



Domestic homicide is when someone is killed by a person they are personally connected to.

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)



A **Domestic Homicide Review (DHR)** is when different organisations look into when a person dies, or seems to have died, because of domestic abuse.

A Domestic Homicide Review is also done when:



- A victim of domestic abuse takes their own life - this is called suicide.



- A victim of domestic abuse dies for reasons that we cannot explain.

Domestic Homicide Review Chair (DHR Chair)



A **Domestic Homicide Review Chair (DHR Chair)** is a person who is in charge of leading a Domestic Homicide Review.

Offender



An **offender** is a person who has committed a crime and broke the law.

In this booklet, when we say offender, we mean someone who has killed someone they are personally connected to.

Police Crime Commissioners



A **Police Crime Commissioner** is a person who is in charge of checking local police services in a certain area.

Victim



A **victim** is a person who has been harmed by a crime.

In this booklet, when we say victim, we mean someone who has died from domestic abuse.

About this booklet



This booklet is from the UK Government.

It is our new set of guidelines about:



- When a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is done.



- How a DHR is done.



- How we will learn from a DHR.



We wrote these new DHR guidelines with the help of lots of different people.

Our DHR guidelines are for organisations and people who:



- Lead and organise DHRs, like Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs).



- Work on DHRs, like Domestic Homicide Review Chairs (DHR Chairs).



- Take part in DHRs, like local services and the victim's family.



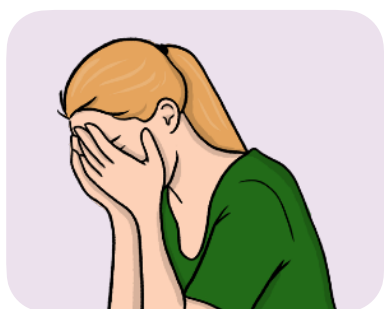
Our DHR guidelines are for DHRs that are done in England and Wales.

When a Domestic Homicide Review is done



A DHR is done when a person over the age of 16 dies, or seems to have died, because of domestic abuse.

A DHR is also done when:



- A victim of domestic abuse takes their own life - this is called suicide.



- A victim of domestic abuse dies for reasons that we cannot explain.



We use the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act to decide what domestic abuse is.



DHRs are **not** done to find out who killed the victim and how they were killed.

DHRs are done to find out:



- How the victim could have been helped better when they were alive.



- How the victim's death could have been stopped.



- How we can learn from the victim's death.

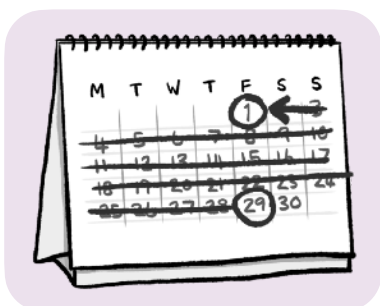
Deciding if a Domestic Homicide Review should be done



When a victim dies from domestic abuse, the local police service tells the local CSP.



Family members or friends of the victim can also tell the local CSP if they think the victim died from domestic abuse.



In the 4 weeks after being told about a victim's death, the CSP does a **Scoping Review**.



This means the CSP looks at information to do with the victim's death and decides whether a DHR needs to be done.



The CSP will tell the victim's family that a Scoping Review is being done.



Once the Scoping Review is done, the CSP will decide whether a DHR is needed or not.

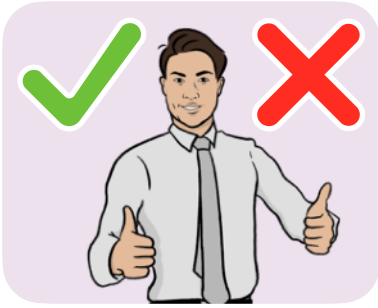
If the CSP decides a DHR is not needed



If the CSP decides a DHR is not needed, a group of people called the Home Office Quality Assurance Board (QA Board) will be told.



The QA Board is in charge of checking the CSP did the Scoping Review correctly.



The QA Board is also in charge of making sure the CSP has made the right decision.



If the QA Board disagrees with the CSP's decision, they will tell the CSP that a DHR should be done.



If the CSP still does not think a DHR is needed, it can ask the **Home Secretary** to look at the Scoping Review.

The **Home Secretary** is a politician in government.



The Home Secretary can make the final decision about whether a DHR should be done, even if the CSP still disagrees.

How a Domestic Homicide Review is done

Setting up the DHR



If it is decided that a DHR is needed, then the CSP will set up a local **DHR Panel**.

A **DHR Panel** is a group of local people who do DHRs.

A DHR Panel must include:



- Staff from the local police service.



- Staff from the local council.

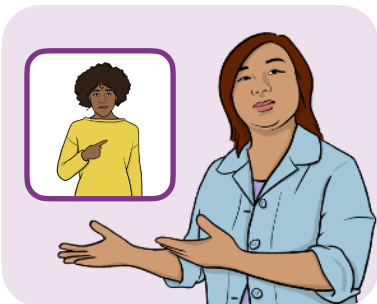
A DHR Panel must also include:



- Staff from local probation services.



- Staff from local healthcare and NHS services.



- People from organisations that help women and girls who are victims of domestic abuse.



The CSP will also choose a Domestic Homicide Review Chair (DHR Chair).

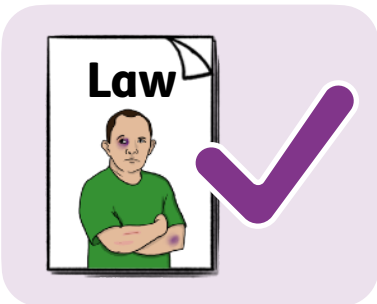
The DHR Chair must:



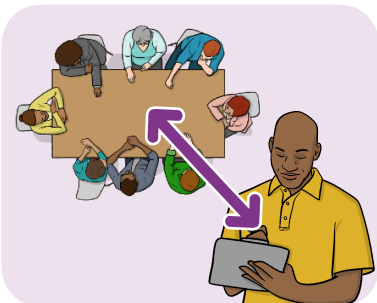
- Not be a member of staff from any of the services in the DHR Panel.



- Finish the DHR Chair training - this training will teach them how to be a good DHR Chair.

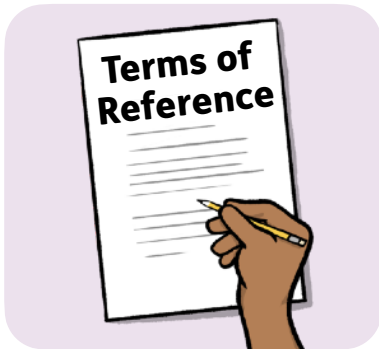


- Have the right skills to be a DHR Chair, like knowing about domestic abuse laws.



The DHR Chair and Panel will work together to carry out the DHR Review.

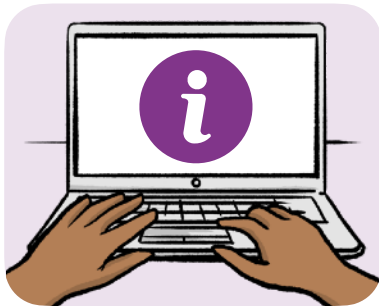
Doing the DHR



The DHR Chair and Panel will start by writing a document called a **Terms of Reference**.

This document will explain the aims of the DHR and the role of the DHR Panel.

Carrying out a DHR involves:



1. Collecting lots of different information.



2. Looking at this information and finding out how we can learn from the victim's death.

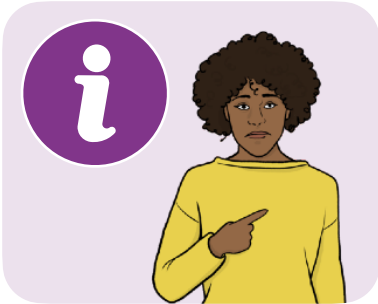


3. Writing down what was found out from the DHR.

We will explain more about these things over the next few pages.

1. Collecting information

When carrying out a DHR, the DHR Chair and Panel will collect information about:



- The victim and their life before they died.



- The offender and their life before they killed the victim.



- Local services and organisations that supported the victim or offender.



- Local services and organisations that should have been supporting the victim or offender, but were not.

The DHR Chair and Panel will also collect information about:



- How the victim's family members, friends or neighbours supported them.

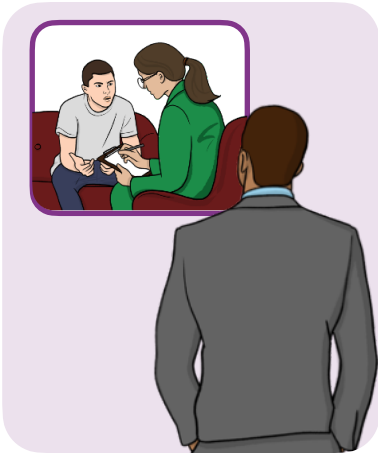


- Other reviews that are being carried out, like a Safeguarding Review.



- Other DHRs that have been done in the same area.

The DHR Chair and Panel can collect this information in different ways, like:



- Carrying out **Individual Management Reviews (IMRs)**.

An **Individual Management Review** is when the DHR Chair and Panel look at a local service or organisation that supported the victim or offender.



They will look at how the local service or organisation works and how it can improve.



- Talking to the victim and offender's family members, friends and neighbours.



- Reading documents that already have lots of information, like the Scoping Review.

2. Looking at the information

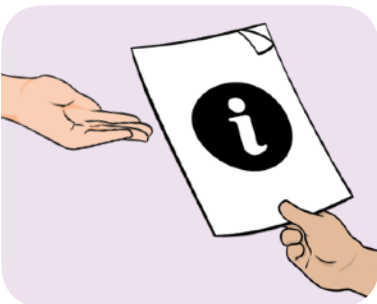


The DHR Chair and Panel will carefully read all the information they have collected.

When they are reading the information, they are looking for answers to these questions:



- How and why did the victim die?



- What information about the victim was shared between different services and organisations when they were alive?



- What could have stopped the victim's death from happening?

They are also looking for answers to these questions:



- How could local services and organisations have helped the victim better when they were alive?



- What can we learn from this victim's death?

3. Writing down what was found out

The DHR Chair and Panel must keep a record of and write down:



- What they do and who they speak to.



- The information they collect.



The DHR Chair and Panel must also keep a record of and write down what they find out.



We have made a **DHR Toolkit** to help the DHR Chair and Panel record the DHR.

The **DHR Toolkit** has forms and documents for the DHR Chair and Panel to fill in.



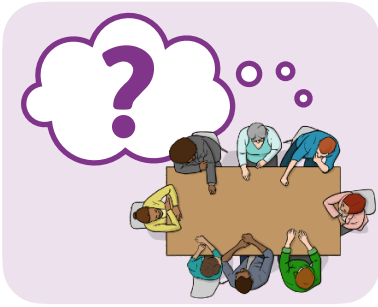
DHRs and written documents will be shared with the public.

They will be posted on:



- The CSP website.
- UK Government website.

During a Domestic Homicide Review



When carrying out a DHR, there are some things that the DHR Chair and Panel must do and think about:

Being sensitive



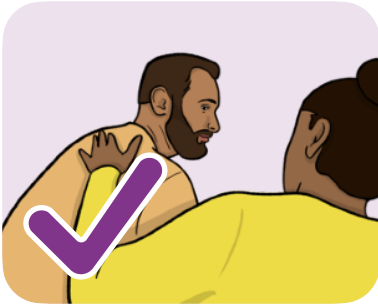
Being **sensitive** means thinking about the feelings of the people around us.



Being sensitive can involve changing the way we act or speak so that we are not upsetting other people.



People who were involved in the victim's life will be upset over the victim's death.

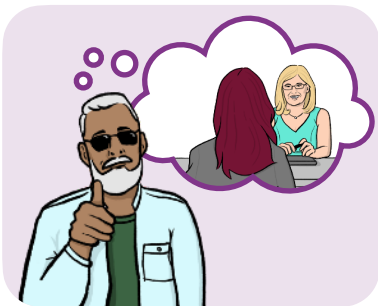


When carrying out a DHR, the DHR Chair and Panel should be sensitive when talking to these people.

This will help to make sure that:

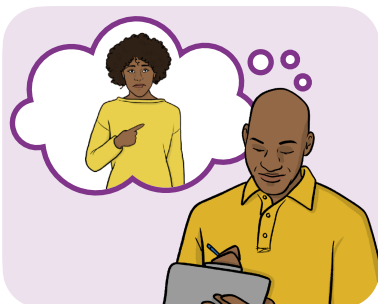


- DHRs support people, rather than upset or hurt them.



- People feel comfortable talking to the DHR Chair and Panel.

Thinking about the victim

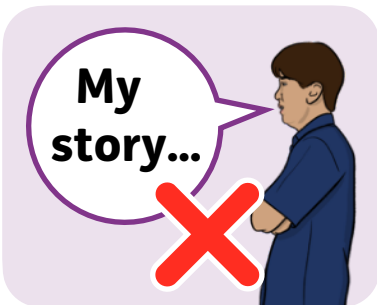


When carrying out a DHR, the DHR Chair and Panel should always be thinking about the victim.

Thinking about the victim means the DHR Chair and Panel must:



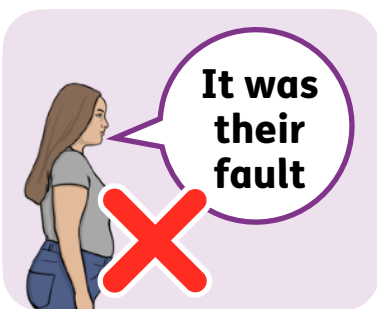
- Make sure that the victim's family members and friends are involved in the DHR.



- Not agree with the offender's story and believe what they are saying without asking them questions.



- Include experts in domestic abuse in the DHR.



- Make sure nobody who is carrying out the DHR is saying that what happened to the victim was their fault.



- Look at what stopped the victim from getting help, rather than blaming the victim for not getting help.

Involving family members and friends

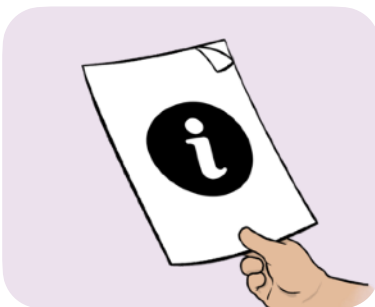


The family members and friends of the victim must be told a DHR is being done.

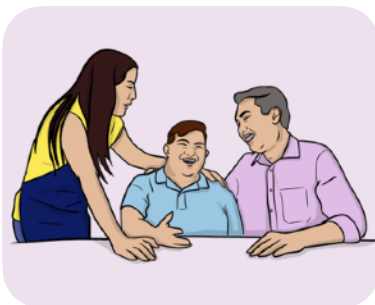


If they want to take part in the DHR, then they must be included at every stage of the DHR.

Family members and friends must be given:



- All the information that they need.



- Support that they need to be able to take part in the DHR.



Family members and friends must also be given the chance to give information about the victim to the DHR Chair and Panel.



When taking part in the DHR, family members and friends must be kept safe.



If family members and friends do not want to take part, the DHR will still be done.



The DHR Chair and Panel should contact these family members and friends again at the end of the DHR, to check they have not changed their mind.

Involving offenders



It can be helpful to involve offenders in DHRs.



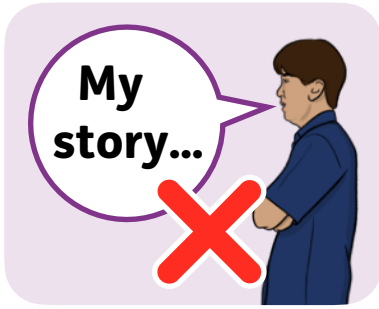
By talking to an offender, DHR Chairs and Panels may be able to understand how they might have been stopped from killing the victim.



For example, if an offender had got more support from a service, they may have started to get better and stopped abusing the victim.



But DHR Chairs and Panels must not focus on the offender - they must focus on the victim instead.



DHR Chairs and Panels also must not agree with the offender's story and believe what they say without asking them questions.



The DHR Chair and Panel must tell the victim's family members and friends before they involve the offender.

Thinking about the victim's characteristics

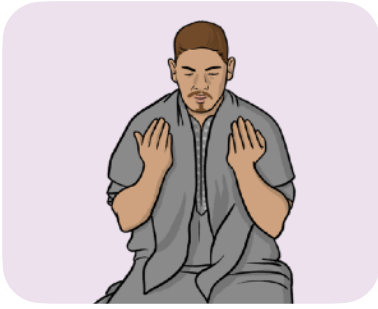
A person's **characteristics** are things that describe:



- The way they look.



- Their personality.

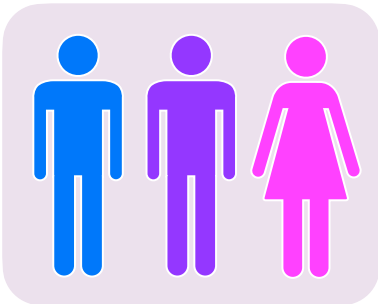


A person's **characteristics** also describe the way they live their life, like who they choose to marry or what religion they follow.

Characteristics include:



- Age.



- Gender - this is whether someone is a man, a woman or uses a different word to describe their gender.



- Race - this is where you are from and the colour of your skin.



A person's characteristics can affect how they live their life.

When carrying out a DHR, the DHR Chair and Panel must think about whether any of the victim's characteristics:



- Stopped them from getting help.



- Made it harder to get help.



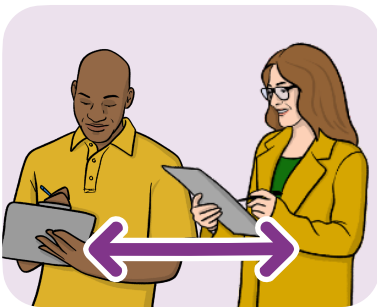
- Changed the way that local services and organisations treated them.

Knowing about other reviews

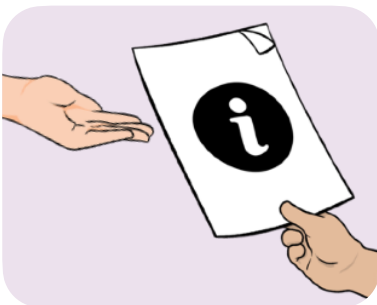
When a victim dies, there may be other reviews that need to be done, like:



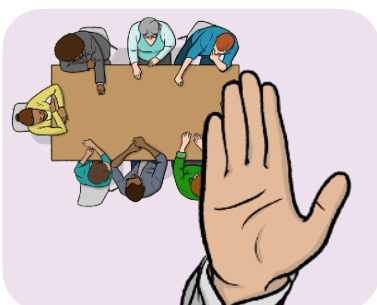
- A Mental Health Homicide Review.
- A Safeguarding Review.
- A Serious Further Offence Review.



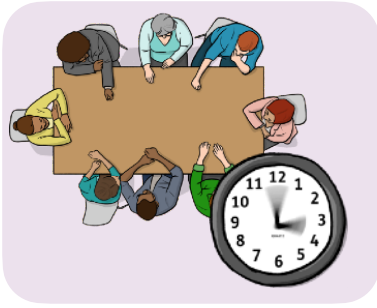
Often the DHR and other reviews can be carried out at the same time.



If this happens, the DHR Chair and Panel may be able to share information with organisations carrying out the other reviews.



Sometimes the DHR Chair and Panel may decide to stop the DHR while other reviews are carried out.



If this happens, the DHR must carry on as soon as the other reviews are finished.



At the start of a DHR, the DHR Chair and CSP must let local organisations, like courts, know that a DHR is being done.



This will mean local organisations can tell the DHR Chair if other reviews are also being done.

Working with the police



When carrying out a DHR, the local police services may still be looking into the victim's death.

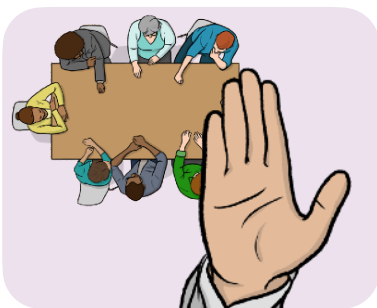
They may still be trying to find out who the offender is.



The DHR Chair must let the local police services know that a DHR is being done.



The DHR Chair and Panel must work closely with the police service when carrying out the DHR.



The DHR Chair and Panel may decide to stop the DHR while the police look into the victim's death.

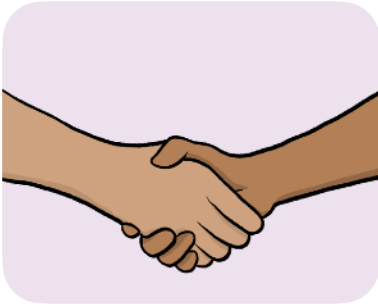
Working with coroners



A **coroner** is a professional who looks at a victim's body after they have died, to find out how they died.



The DHR Chair must let the coroner know that a DHR is being done.



The DHR Chair and Panel must work closely with the coroner when carrying out the DHR.

Keeping information safe



When carrying out a DHR, the DHR Chair and Panel will collect and look at a lot of personal information.

The DHR Chair and Panel must make sure that:



- Information is kept safe until the DHR is ready to be shared with the public.



- The information they will share with the public will not stop the police from being able to find the offender.

This is if the police are still looking into the victim's death.

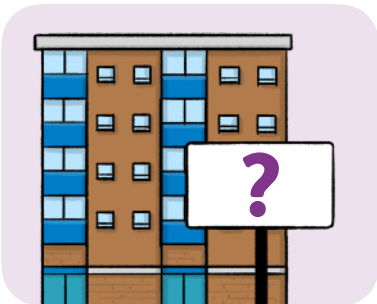
When the DHR Chair and Panel write down what they have found out from the DHR, they must not include:



- The real names of anyone who has taken part in the DHR.



- The exact dates of when events happened.



- The names of places or buildings where events happened.



- The gender or age of any children mentioned in the DHR.

After a Domestic Homicide Review

Action plan



Once the DHR Chair and Panel have finished the DHR, they must send everything they have found out to the CSP.



The CSP will then write an **action plan**.

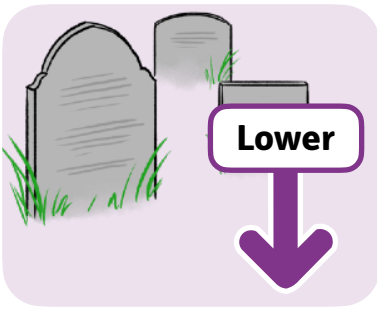
The **action plan** will explain:



- What local services and organisations can do to improve the way they support victims of domestic abuse.



- What services and organisations in other areas can do to improve the way they support victims of domestic abuse.



The action plan will also explain what we can all do to lower the number of domestic homicides in the UK.



The CSP will use what was found out in the DHR to write the action plan.



The DHR Chair should help and support the CSP with the writing of the action plan.



The action plan will be shared as part of the DHR.

QA Board check



Before DHRs are shared with the public, they must be checked by the QA Board.

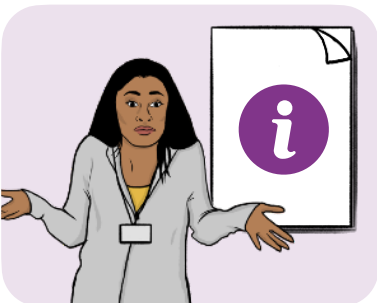
The QA Board must check that:



- The DHR has been carried out correctly and safely.



- All information in the DHR has been written correctly.



- The DHR is not missing any important information.

Sharing with the public



When the QA Board decides a DHR is ready to be shared, it must be shared with the victim's family members and friends first.

If they are happy for the DHR to be shared, then the CSP will post it on:

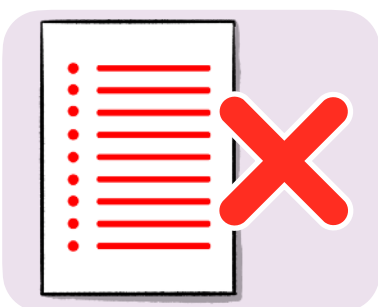


- The CSP website.
- UK Government website.

Sometimes the DHR Chair and Panel may think:



- Some parts of the DHR should **not** be shared with the public.



- The DHR should not be shared with the public at all.



If this happens, the DHR Chair and Panel should let the QA Board know why they think this.



The QA Board and CSP will look at what the DHR Chair and Panel have said and decide what parts of the DHR will be shared.



After a DHR has been shared, some new information about the victim's death may be found.



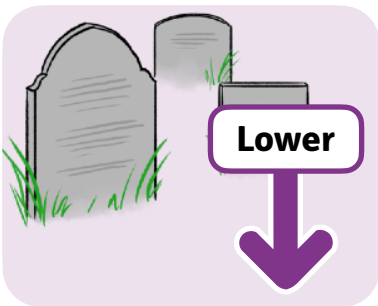
The CSP will decide if the DHR needs to be changed because of this new information.

How we learn from a Domestic Homicide Review



Services, organisations and the government must learn from DHRs by making changes that are suggested in action plans.

Making changes will:



- Lower the number of domestic homicides in the UK.



- Make sure victims of domestic abuse know where to get support and how to ask for support.



- Make sure victims of domestic abuse get good support that is right for them.

Services, organisations and the government will be supported to do this by:



- Local CSPs.



- The Domestic Abuse Commissioner.



- **The Home Office.**

The Home Office is a part of the UK Government.

What the CSP must do

The CSP must:



- Help local services and organisations to make the changes.



- Work with local Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and help them to check changes are being followed.



- Set up learning events - these are events where a CSP will talk to local services and organisations about their action plan.

Learning events must happen after the DHR has been shared with the public.

What the Domestic Abuse Commissioner must do



The Domestic Abuse Commissioner will write a report every year that explains what the government can do to better support victims of domestic abuse.



They will write this report by looking at what DHRs in the last year have found out.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner must also:



- Help organisations across the UK work together.



- Support CSPs with their work.



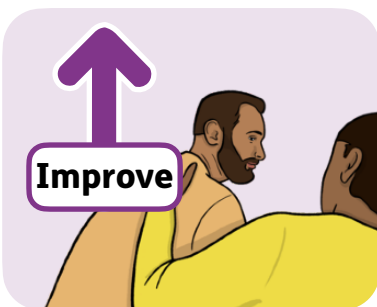
The Domestic Abuse Commissioner must also check whether services and organisations across the UK are improving.

What the Home Office must do

The Home Office must check that the government is:

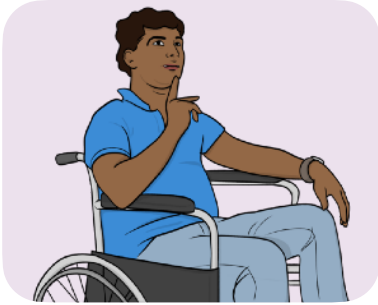


- Following any changes that the Domestic Abuse Commissioner has suggested.

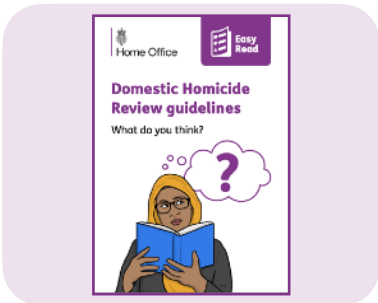


- Improving the way that it supports victims of domestic abuse.

What do you think?



We would like to know what you think of our DHR guidelines.



You can do this by answering the questions in our 'Domestic Homicide Reviews: What do you think' booklet.



You have until 1 July 2024 to answer these questions.