



HM Government

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Report: *Learning from Loss*

- Government Response

May 2026



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Introduction

The Home Office provided the Domestic Abuse Commissioner (DAC) with funding to launch the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Oversight Mechanism pilot in 2024. The pilot has now concluded and the Home Office is hugely grateful to the Commissioner for publishing her report, *Learning from Loss*, and the effort to which the Commissioner's team and local partners have gone to explore this issue. The Government has responded to the Commissioner's recommendations in this publication.

In the year ending March 2025, over 1 in 4 women aged 16 and over reported experiencing domestic abuse since the age of 16 (29.6%) as well as around 1 in 5 men (21.8%)¹. Domestic abuse is also high harm, with the annual socio-economic cost in 2025/26 prices being an estimated £89.6 billion² and can have fatal consequences, with 111 domestic homicides taking place in the year ending March 2025.³ We know that overall, there were increasing numbers of reported cases where a victim of domestic abuse has taken their own life from 2020 to 2024.⁴

This Government is treating VAWG as a national emergency. "[Freedom from Violence and Abuse: a cross-government strategy to build a safer society for women and girls](#)", published in December 2025, sets out the Government's plan to halve VAWG over the next decade.

DHRs offer a unique opportunity for national and local agencies, local communities and society as a whole to learn from all domestic abuse related deaths and treat every death as preventable. These reviews bring local practitioners together to identify and implement learning from deaths of those aged 16 or over which have, or appear to have, resulted from domestic abuse.

The Government is committed to upholding the fundamental principles of the DHR process. We recognise that improvements are needed in the way these reviews are conducted, and the Home Office is implementing a substantive programme of reforms to ensure DHRs are carried out more effectively. This includes updating the DHR Statutory

¹ Office for National Statistics (2025). Crime in England and Wales. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/domesticabuseinenglandandwales/overview/november2025>

² Home Office (2019). The Economic and Social Costs of Domestic Abuse. Research Report 107. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f637b8f8fa8f5106d15642a/horr107.pdf>

³ [Homicide in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

⁴ https://www.vkpp.org.uk/assets/Year-4-Report_publication-with-footnote.pdf

Guidance, which will go further in providing information on how to conduct reviews effectively, to ensure learning from reviews is disseminated and actioned promptly.

The legislation underpinning DHRs has also been updated through the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, so that going forward, reviews will be commissioned when the death has, or appears to have, resulted from domestic abuse as defined by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, with the purpose of identifying lessons to be learned from the death. This aligns DHRs with the statutory definition of domestic abuse, ensuring reviews consider the different kinds of abuse and how that may have impacted a victim's life. The name of the reviews will also be changed to 'Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews' to reflect the range of the deaths which fall within their scope. These changes are expected to commence this year.

Additionally, we have made significant improvements to the Home Office chaired DHR Quality Assurance Board. In addition to statutory organisations, we have introduced three new public appointments to the Board membership. These appointees bring expertise from across the VAWG sector and policing, which will enhance the level of scrutiny applied to the quality assurance process. The Board will review more reviews every month to reduce backlogs and apply their expertise to provide Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) with feedback to improve the overarching quality of reviews and implement learning more swiftly.

Oversight is a vital part of DHRs and the DHR Oversight Mechanism has provided an important opportunity to learn about the oversight and implementation of DHR recommendations. The report is clear that more needs to be done to embed a culture of learning within DHRs and ensure that recommendations from reviews are shared and implemented promptly, to improve systems and policy, and ultimately prevent future deaths.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner has made three recommendations in her report. The Government has accepted or partially accepted two recommendations and rejected one recommendation.

Welsh Government

Section 16 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ("the Act") requires the UK Government (via the responsible Government department) to publish a response to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's report made under section 8 of the Act. This duty does not apply to the

Welsh Government and therefore this response is issued by the UK Government. The Oversight Mechanism covers recommendations made within DHRs from England and Wales. The Welsh Government implemented the Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR) during the pilot of the Oversight Mechanism.

Response to Recommendations

National Roll-Out (Recommendation 1)

Funding for the continued piloting and national roll-out of the Domestic Abuse-Related Deaths Accountability and Oversight Mechanism. The Home Office should provide £1.45m in Year 1 and £550k pa thereafter to develop and deliver a national accountability and oversight mechanism, housed within the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner. This would fund:

- **The development of a new digital platform which would:**
 - **Enable CSPs to upload DHRs, including recommendations and action plans**
 - **Enable local agencies and national Government to directly update on implementation of their DHR recommendations and actions**
 - **Through AI and machine learning, synthesise the combined learning from DHR recommendations, actions, and implementation progress**
 - **Enable local agencies and national Government, to effectively utilise this synthesis, to develop an evidence-based strategic response to domestic abuse with ready-made advice on good practice for implementation.**

- **Resource within the Commissioner’s Office and annual running costs. This would provide for the maintenance of the digital platform and a small team of practice experts and researchers, who would bring greater scrutiny and allow for escalation of systemic concerns.**

The Government partially accepts this recommendation.

The Government fully recognises the importance of embedding oversight within the DHR process and ensuring that recommendations are implemented at both a local and national level to drive meaningful change for victims of domestic abuse. We are committed to taking forward the learning from DHRs and increasing accountability. That is why the Home Office will commit to funding an oversight mechanism for recommendations made as part of DHRs. We will work closely with the Commissioner to deliver this.

The Home Office Oversight Mechanism will provide a digital platform through which recommendations from DHRs can be recorded and monitored. This will support the organisation and coordination of recommendations to ensure that learning is captured and translated into tangible action. Further detail on the mechanism will be announced in due course.

We agree that AI and machine learning should be used where possible to support this work and are grateful to the Commissioner for raising this as a possibility. As part of this work, we will also explore how these technologies can be used to improve the functionality of the DHR Library, which holds all published reviews in an online repository.

Government Response to Recommendations from DHRs (Recommendation 2)

Improving the Government's response to and implementation of its own recommendations from DHRs. Just as local agencies are expected to learn from domestic abuse-related deaths and take their recommendations seriously, so too must central Government. Central Government must act upon national recommendations, as well as recognise where consistent issues need a national response. Timely communication between Government departments and CSPs, as well as coordination and communication between departments, is critical. The Commissioner has previously recommended a suite of proposals for improving how national recommendations are responded to in her response to the statutory guidance consultation, and these still stand.

In addition, the Commissioner recommends that national Government:

- **Respond immediately upon receipt of a DHR recommendation, with each individual Government department taking clear responsibility for implementation of any recommendations made to them.**
- **Share updates on implementation of their DHR recommendations with CSPs directly, promptly, and transparently. This should include:**
 - **The creation of a network of specific points of contact within Government departments, with public mailboxes listed in guidance or on gov.uk to allow CSPs to easily contact relevant officials**
 - **Establishing a formal process in which action taken to implement recommendations can be shared with CSPs when requested**
 - **Notifying CSPs when a recommendation will not be taken forward or implemented**
 - **Ensuring recommendations are received by the correct department and notifying CSPs when recommendations are transferred between departments**
 - **Ensure responses to national DHR recommendations are considered within cross-Government governance structures, such as the Violence Against Women and Girls Ministerial Board. This should also consider wider review processes and the potential for joint learning and implementation, such as SUSRs in Wales, Child Safeguarding Practice**

Reviews or Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews. This should feed into the Safer Streets Mission Board.

- **Create an escalation process for where recommendations for departments are not being met.**
- **Analyse consistent themes within DHRs to recognise systemic problems that warrant a national response – whether this is in the recommendations themselves or in implementation of these recommendations.**
- **Provide guidance to DHR Chairs on how to best develop national recommendations.**
- **Ensure Chair training builds an understanding of how national Government recommendations might work.**
- **Make use of the Quality Assurance process to correct recommendations that are for the wrong Government department.**

The Government accepts this recommendation.

To address the recommendation in its entirety, we have grouped the response into three main themes.

National recommendations

The Government firmly agrees that the response to national recommendations requires improvement, and a programme of work is already underway to address the matter. The Home Office has introduced a new process as part of the wider programme of DHR reform, through which the sharing and implementation of national recommendations will be monitored across Government departments by the Home Office DHR Secretariat. This will ensure that national recommendations are acknowledged, recorded, and directed to the appropriate department or team. CSPs are welcome to contact the Home Office DHR Secretariat with queries related to contacting other Government departments. The Secretariat will also notify CSPs when recommendations are incorrectly assigned to the Home Office.

National recommendations will be processed prior to publication where possible, to ensure learning is disseminated at the earliest possible opportunity. This process is intended to improve coordination across Government and ultimately, ensure learning from DHRs is taken forward more swiftly. Additionally, going forward all national recommendations will be shared with Ministerial Violence Against Women and Girls Board members, to ensure that learning from DHRs is overseen and considered by lead Ministers in all departments with recommendations to implement.

Following the publication of the new statutory guidance, the Home Office will provide a cover letter for CSPs to send alongside national recommendations, explaining what DHRs are and the expectations for other Government departments in terms of timeliness of response.

DHR Chairs

The Home Office currently funds Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) to deliver mandatory training for DHR Chairs, in order to ensure that individuals undertaking this role are fully equipped to discharge their responsibilities effectively and to a high standard. Following an open competition, AAFDA has to date been awarded £277,460 to design and deliver the Chair training programme between 2024–2026.

The training provides comprehensive guidance on conducting and coordinating DHRs in line with the Statutory Guidance. It covers the role and responsibilities of Chairs and equips participants with the skills needed to work constructively with agencies and bereaved families and to identify learning that can strengthen safeguarding responses for victims of abuse.

As part of this work, AAFDA has established a register of accredited DHR Chairs for England and Wales. The register lists individuals who have successfully completed the training and are therefore appropriately qualified to chair DHRs. It includes relevant information such as professional experience, contact details, availability, and the date training was completed. CSPs can request access to the official register by contacting AAFDA at training@aafda.org.uk.

From May 2026 onwards, completion of the Chair training will be a mandatory requirement for any individual seeking appointment by a CSP to chair a DHR.

Quality assurance

In September 2025, the Home Office introduced a [new DHR Quality Assurance \(QA\) Board](#) made up of public appointees and statutory agencies, who bring extensive expertise in domestic abuse and broader issues related to VAWG, to review all DHRs prior to publication. This is intended to create a more streamlined process, whereby more reports are reviewed every month, and CSPs receive feedback in a more timely manner.

As part of their feedback to CSPs, the QA Board will highlight and encourage changes to recommendations where needed, to improve the quality and clarity of recommendations. The QA Board will also share best practice and wider insights by publishing an annual report on DHRs reviewed and themes in QA Board feedback. This will add to the existing knowledge base built by reports on key themes in DHRs which went through the quality assurance process from 2019.⁵

Dedicated Funding for DHRs (Recommendation 3)

Improving capacity and resourcing to deliver DHRs locally. The Home Office provides dedicated funding to local areas for DHRs, which should include costs related but not limited to the costs of:

- **Chairs and authors**
- **Expert panel members**
- **Specialist service engagement (as experts) including ‘by and for’ services**
- **Coordination, management, and governance of reviews**
- **Support for families to engage with the process**
- **Dissemination of learning**

The Home Office should work with CSPs and PCCs to determine the most appropriate models of funding.

The Government rejects this recommendation.

The Government acknowledges the concerns raised regarding the financial and resourcing challenges involved in undertaking DHRs. Funding for DHRs is provided through the local government funding settlement and unfortunately, the Home Office is unable to provide specific guidance on how funding should be allocated locally.

However, the new Statutory Guidance has been drafted to increase efficiencies and reduce delays in the overarching process. For example, a new toolkit, with templates, process maps, checklists, draft letters and key contacts will be included to help guide those undertaking reviews and ensure consistent and high-quality outputs.

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/Government/publications/key-findings-from-analysis-of-domestic-homicide-reviews>

As set out above, a new quality assurance process has also been implemented to create a more streamlined process, whereby more reports will be reviewed every month, and CSPs receive feedback in a more timely manner.

With regard to support for families engaging with the DHR process, the Home Office funds AAFDA to provide direct support to families bereaved by homicide, suicide and unexplained deaths that have taken place following domestic abuse. This includes supporting families to understand and engage with the DHR process. The Home Office has enhanced funding for this service several times in recent years, reflecting a clear acknowledgement of its essential role.

In addition, the Government funds the National Homicide Service to support families bereaved by homicide across England and Wales. The service is free of charge to users and can provide support through the DHR process.

Conclusion

We would like to thank the Commissioner and her office for the work in producing this important report. DHRs are a crucial tool for understanding missed opportunities and identifying learning from the tragic deaths that are linked to domestic abuse. As the Home Office develops the new Oversight Mechanism, we will work closely with the Commissioner to ensure that the important work of the pilot is taken forward.

As outlined above, the Government is absolutely committed to reforming DHRs and tackling domestic abuse related deaths, as part of the mission to halve VAWG in a decade. The work set out in this response aims to improve the efficiency of DHRs and alleviate pressures on CSPs, to ensure reviews are proportionate and timely, with clear processes for every step of the process. These changes will ultimately place a greater focus on sharing and implementing learning, to ensure lessons learnt are taken on board to ultimately prevent future deaths.

More broadly, the Government is implementing a suite of new interventions, powers, and measures to strengthen the whole system response to domestic abuse. This includes:

- introducing of Raneem's Law, to embed domestic abuse specialists and dedicated domestic abuse teams in 999 control rooms;
- launching new Domestic Abuse Protection Orders in select police forces and courts, which cover all forms of domestic abuse, to strength protection for victims by imposing tougher restrictions on perpetrators, such as electronic monitoring and attendance on perpetrator programmes;
- investing £53 million over four years to roll out The Drive Project across England and Wales, to target the highest risk, highest harm, serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to protect victims and prevent reoffending;
- rolling out new measures to tackle stalking including statutory guidance to empower the police to release the identities of online stalkers to protect victims, and a review of the stalking legislation to ensure it is fit for purpose; and
- establishing a new National Policing Centre for VAWG and Public Protection, to provide coordinated, national leadership within policing to tackle VAWG, including domestic abuse and child sexual abuse.

These measures will hold perpetrators accountable, improve the response to victims of domestic abuse, and are ultimately intended to prevent future deaths.

The cross-Government Freedom from Violence and Abuse Strategy is clear that halving VAWG requires a transformative response across all of Government and wider society, and we look forward to our continued work with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner to help achieve this.

