



Domestic Homicide Reviews

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS FROM AN ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC
HOMICIDE REVIEWS IN STAFFORDSHIRE AND STOKE-ON-TRENT

October 2018

1 Introduction

1. A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with whom they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves. Since 13 April 2011 there has been a statutory requirement for local areas to conduct a DHR following a domestic homicide that meets the criteria.
2. DHRs provide a rich source of information on the nature of domestic homicide, the context in which it occurs and, most importantly, in the lessons that can be learned from the tragic event. This analysis sets out what we know about domestic homicide and draws out common themes and trends and identifies learning that emerged across the sample of DHRs.
3. The analysis covers Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, and is designed to sit alongside the Home Office national analysis of DHRs, published in December 2016.

The Home Office analysis is available here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-homicide-review-lessons-learned>

4. The purpose of this analysis is to promote key learning and trends from the DHRs with the aim of informing and shaping future policy development and operational practice locally.
5. We encourage partners and stakeholders to reflect on the learning identified and to consider how this can be used to deliver improvements to practice within their local context furthering their ability to safeguard victims and prevent domestic homicide.
6. This paper also reports on what is being done locally to tackle these issues.
7. In addition to DHRs, Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent) has also conducted Multi-Agency Learning Reviews (MALRs). These are reviews that initially begin as DHRs but are then later re-badged as MALRs when further information comes to light to indicate that the criteria for a DHR have not been met after all. MALRs follow the same process as DHRs but the final reports are not sent to the Home Office for quality assurance purposes and they are not published. The final reports are, however, shared with all agencies who took part and with those agencies who have been assigned recommendations as a result of the review. The lessons learned from these reviews are equally as valid as those learned from DHRs.

Key Findings

Statistics

- There have been 14 domestic homicide reviews in the area which have been cleared for publication by the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel.
- In addition in Staffordshire, excluding Stoke, four Multi-Agency Learning Reviews (MALRs) have been undertaken. This brings the total number of completed reviews to 18. Total figures from this point onwards will be broken down based on 18 completed reviews.
- There were 6 male and 8 female domestic homicide victims (which includes intimate partner homicides, familial homicides and same household homicides) aged 16 and over.
- In both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, the majority of perpetrators in domestic homicide cases were male (83% in Staffordshire and 87.5% in Stoke-on-Trent).
- The number of domestic homicide victims fluctuated from year to year, there is no clear trend upwards or downwards (this is due in part to the small sample size).
- There were 7 domestic homicide victims killed by a partner / ex- partner, 6 killed by a family member, and 1 killed by a member of the same household (e.g. landlord/lodger).
- In the 4 MALRs, 3 females were physically harmed (2 by a partner/ex-partner, 1 by a family member) and 1 female committed suicide. Of the three females who were harmed, two later died and one survived. The circumstances surrounding the deaths of the three deceased females meant that no-one was convicted of causing their death hence the associated reviews became MALRs. As the fourth female survived, the case could not be considered as a DHR and hence became an MALR.
- In Stoke-on-Trent, among both men and women, the highest proportion of domestic homicides was among those aged 30 to 50 (around 40%) although overall there was no clear age pattern in Stoke. In Staffordshire, the youngest DHR victim was 19 and the oldest 73, with victims in their forties being the most prevalent (30%). Within the MALRs, the youngest deceased was 52 and the oldest 89.
- The most common method of killing for domestic homicide victims in Stoke-on-Trent was by blunt force (with or without a weapon); in Staffordshire, the most common method of killing was stabbing.
- The majority of domestic homicide victims were White British (100% in Staffordshire and 75% in Stoke-on-Trent), and all perpetrators were White British.
- Out of all 18 domestic homicide/multi-agency reviews in the area, there were only 5 cases where there were children or young people under 18 living within the household.

Analysis of Domestic Homicide Reviews

Methodology

The 14 domestic homicide reviews included in this analysis are those which have been cleared for publication by the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel. The 4 Multi-Agency Learning Reviews have all taken place in Staffordshire (excluding Stoke-on-Trent) and have all been completed. The 18 reviews relate to deaths that took place between July 2011 and January 2016.

There are a number of other domestic homicide reviews currently ongoing in the area which are not included within this report due as they have yet to receive clearance.

The analysis differs from the Home Office report by using all categories of domestic homicides (intimate partner, familial and same household), whereas the Home Office analysis uses only intimate partner homicides.

The reasons for this are:

- a) the same themes cut across all types of homicides in this area; and
- b) using only intimate partner homicides would not provide a sufficient number of cases for a robust analysis.

This report was written and the associated analysis carried out by the lead officers responsible for managing the DHR processes within Staffordshire County Council and the Stoke-on-Trent Safer City Partnership.

Contributions to the report were also provided by an analyst from the Staffordshire County Council's Strategy, Governance and Change team, and from two students from Staffordshire University undertaking a placement at Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

The case attributes were analysed for each of the DHRs to explore the characteristics of those involved (e.g. the age and gender of victims and perpetrators).

A content analysis of the case histories contained within the homicides was performed, using the Home Office methodology (see Home Office report for further details).

Case Attributes Analysis

In order to explore the circumstances around domestic homicides and any commonalities that may be present, various case attributes were analysed.

Gender

Intimate Partner Homicide

Of the 7 intimate partner homicide DHRs, just over half of these (4) involved a male perpetrator and female victim. Of the remaining 3 DHRs, the victim was male and the perpetrator was female in 2 cases, and there was 1 homicide where the perpetrator and victim were males in a same sex relationship.

Intimate Partner MALRs

Of the 4 Staffordshire MALRs 3 involved intimate partners, in which there were 2 female victims and 2 male perpetrators. In the third case, the deceased female committed suicide and reference to a “perpetrator” would not be appropriate.

Familial Homicide

Within the 6 familial homicide DHRs, there were 3 female victims and 3 male victims. In these cases all 6 perpetrators were male.

In terms of the relationships, 3 cases were patricide (the father of the perpetrator was the victim), 2 cases were matricide (the mother of the perpetrator was the victim) and 1 case was fratricide (the step-sister of the perpetrator was the victim).

Familial MALRs

Of the 4 Staffordshire MALRs there was 1 involving a familial relationship (grandmother and grandson) where the grandmother died.

Same Household Homicide

There was 1 same household homicide DHR, in which the victim and perpetrator were both male.

The relationship between the two parties was landlord (victim) and lodger (perpetrator).

Age

The most common age group for perpetrators in the DHRs analysed was 31-40 years of age (5) followed by 41-50 years of age (3). For victims, the most common age group was 41-50 (6) with other age groups having a very low frequency by comparison. See table below.

Table 1: Frequency of age groups for perpetrators and victims involved in DHRs

Age groups	Count of DHRs involving perpetrators in each age group	Count of DHRs involving victims in each age group
11>20	1	2
21-30	2	1
31-40	5	0
41-50	3	6
51-60	1	1
61-70	1	2
71-80	1	1
80+	0	1
DHRs involving multiple victims/perpetrators	0	0
Total number of DHRs	14	14

Multi-Agency Learning Reviews

The age range of the four females who were the subject of Staffordshire MALRs ranged from 52 to 89, with 2 women aged 51-60, 1 aged 71-80 and 1 aged 80+. In these cases, 1 male relative (grandson) was aged 11-20, 2 male partners were aged 51-60 and a third male partner was aged 80+. (NB Because of the nature of MALRs, the males in question were not necessarily charged with any offence but their ages are provided for context.)

Dependent children

Of the 7 intimate partner homicide DHRs, the family structure included dependent children in 3 cases, with no dependent children in the remaining 4 cases. Of the 6 familial and 1 same household homicide DHRs, the family structure included 1 dependent child in one case.

DHRs were further examined to see whether children witnessed or were affected by any abuse, violence or the homicide itself. This was the case in 1 of the 4 DHRs involving dependent children. In another case, the child was not related to, and never lived with the victim. In the third case the child lived with the victim (the child's mother) but was not present at the time of her death. The Review Panel in question sought and received assurance that the child was safeguarded and supported appropriately. In the fourth case the victim's child was 18 months old at the time and was present (along with other family members) when the victim died. The child was subsequently cared for by a family member.

Ethnicity

Of the 14 DHRs, the victim was White British in 12 cases, and Asian in 2 cases.

In all 14 DHRs the perpetrator was White British.

In the 2 cases where the victim and perpetrator were of different ethnicity, there was no evidence from either the criminal justice process or DHR process that ethnicity was a factor in the homicide, or in any of the preceding events.

In the 4 Staffordshire MALRs, the 4 subjects and their 3 respective partners and 1 family member were all White British.

Mental health

Mental health issues were present in 7 of the 14 DHRs. 6 cases involved perpetrators with mental health issues: 4 cases where only the perpetrator had mental health issues and 3 cases where both the perpetrator and the victim had mental health issues.

There were no DHRs involving victims with mental health issues but not perpetrators.

Of the 7 DHRs involving perpetrators with mental health issues, all were known to health professionals. Of the 3 DHRs involving victims with mental health issues, all were known to health services.

Of the 4 MALRs, there was 1 where the (surviving) victim had mental health issues and 1 where a female who committed suicide had mental health issues (as did her male partner). 1 MALR involved a young man with learning disabilities.

Substance misuse

Substance misuse was mentioned in 8 of the 14 DHRs: 2 DHRs mentioned substance use by the perpetrator only, 1 by the victim only and 5 by both the perpetrator and victim.

History of violence

In 7 of the 14 DHRs the perpetrator had a history of violence, and in 10 also had a history of general criminality, ranging from theft to drug possession to child sexual abuse.

Method of killing

The most common method of killing for domestic homicide victims in Stoke-on-Trent was by blunt force (with or without a weapon), with 4 such homicides (50% of the Stoke-on-Trent total). The most common method of killing for domestic homicide victims in Staffordshire was by a knife or sharp instrument (50%) and this was the second most common method of killing in Stoke-on-Trent. Other methods of killing included strangulation/ asphyxiation and shooting.

Location of homicides

All 14 domestic homicide cases occurred within the victim's home.
