Bexley Domestic Homicide Review Toolkit

Domestic Homicide Review Toolkit 2019 Version 16/02/2022

Contents

Bexley Domestic Homicide Review Toolkit 1
- Contents 2
- Appendices 2
- Introduction 3
- Purpose of this toolkit 3
- Statutory definition of domestic abuse 3
- Multi-agency statutory guidance for the conduct of DHRs 5
- Local requirements when establishing a DHR in Bexley and notification of a DHR 5

Appendices

- Appendix A - Links to useful resources/leaflets/templates/websites 7
- Appendix B - Notification: Domestic Homicide Review 9
- Appendix C - Further guidance on DHR work in other areas 12
- Appendix D - DHR key stages flow chart 15
- Appendix E - DHR process flow chart 18

Introduction

The requirement to undertake domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) was established on a statutory basis on 13th April 2011 under Section 9 of the Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act (2004). Under Section 9(1) of the Act, local areas are required to conduct a multi-agency review if the death meets the following criteria:

> If 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 OR were a victim took their own life (suicide) and the circumstances give rise to concern, for example it emerges that there was coercive controlling behaviour in the relationship, even if a suspect is not charged with an offence or they are tried and acquitted.

For Bexley, overall responsibility for establishing a review rests with Bexley Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) which is made up of representatives from the 'responsible authorities' (Local Authority, police, fire and rescue, probation services and health) who work together to protect their local communities from crime and help people feel safer.

A DHR should seek to establish the lessons to be learned about how local professionals and organisations work individually and together to safeguard victims. Reviews are not about who is culpable. It aims to identify clear lessons, apply those lessons in timely actions, appropriately amend practice and change policies and procedures. The overall aim is to prevent domestic violence and abuse homicide and improve responses to those affected.

Purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit has been designed to provide an overview to assist Bexley Community Safety Partnership (BCSP) with the undertaking of a domestic homicide review (DHR).

For detailed and up to date guidance BCSP should check the Home Office website and follow their advised templates. DHRs arise from complex situations and each case will be different however sharing your learning and learning from others is an important consideration of DHRs.

Statutory definition of domestic abuse

The definition from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021:

Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is domestic abuse if:

a. "A" and "B" are aged 16 or over and are personally connected with each other;
b. the behaviour is abusive

Behaviour is abusive if it consists of any of the following:

a. physical or sexual abuse
b. violent or threatening behaviour
c. controlling or coercive behaviour
d. economic abuse*
e. psychological, emotional, or other abuse

And it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

*Economic abuse means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on "B" s ability to:

a. acquire, use, or maintain money or other property; or
b. obtain goods or services

Victim/survivor of domestic abuse includes reference to the child who:

a. sees or hears, or experiences the effects of abuse; and
b. is related to "A" or "B"

A child is 'related' to a person if:

a. the person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for the child, or
b. the child and the person are relatives

For the purposes of this Act, two people are 'personally connected' to each other if any of the following applies:

a. they are, or have been, married to each other
b. they are, or have ben, civil partners of each other
c. they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
d. they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)
e. they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other?
f. they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had a parental relationship in relation to the same child (see subsection (2))
g. they are relatives

For the purposes of subsection (1) (f) a person has a parental relationship in relation to a child – if a child is related to a person if:

a. the person is a parent of the child or
b. the person has parental responsibility of the child.

More information about controlling and coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship can be found in the statutory guidance.

This definition also includes so-called 'honour' based violence (HBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage (FM), and it is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

Multi-agency statutory guidance for the conduct of DHRs

The Home Office have published revised guidance for undertaking a DHR. Multi-agency statutory guidance.

The guidance applies to all DHR notifications. The guidance should be referred to in all circumstances where consideration is being given to establishing or carrying out a DHR and in the undertaking of all stages of a multi-agency review.

The Home Office guidance gives core definitions together with the purpose of the guidance and DHR's, this includes:

- how a DHR should be established and conducted
- timescales for undertaking a DHR
- how to involve family, friends and other support networks
- publication of the overview report
- quality assurance (QA) and dissemination of lessons learned

All partners are advised to be familiar with the guidance, the definitions and terminology within it, be acquainted with and use all the suggested template items linked at **Appendix A**.

Local requirements when establishing a DHR in Bexley and notification of a DHR

In line with national guidance, the experience and learning from the Safeguarding Boards and the BCSP Boards desire for:

- the learning and lessons from DHRs to be made explicit and disseminated amongst partners
- that there is a clear role for BCSP in maintaining an oversight on the progress of the DHRs
- to share learning and practice.

When establishing a DHR there is a requirement to:

- Inform BCSP that they have been formally notified by the police or other professional body that a DHR needs to be considered. The notification should include brief circumstances of the incident and whether there are any children or vulnerable adults either directly or indirectly involved. A DHR notification form is included at Appendix B.
- BCSP is to notify Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), Adults Safeguarding and Children's Safeguarding Boards.
- On receipt on this information the BCSP Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Strategy Manager, on behalf of BCSP, will alert the Home Office and others as required that a DHR is being established, using the Home Office Community Safety Partnership reporting form (link at **Appendix B**)

- The BCSP DASV Strategy Manager will recruit an independent chair. The chair or Strategy Manager will notify the family of the potential DHR.
- BCSP DASV Strategy Manager will conduct a scoping exercise to determine all partners / agencies that maybe required to take part in the review.
- CSP DASV to notify family of potential DHR and will recruit an independent chair.
- When drafting the DHR terms of reference the CSP DASV and / or DHR Chair will include that they will ensure that lessons and actions are identified they will be notified to MOPAC, Adults Safeguarding and Children's Safeguarding Boards so that the monitoring and review of actions and embedding of learning into practice can be effectively undertaken.
- Ensure that there is clarity that the DHR, the overview report and related action plan are the responsibility of BCSP.
- Before finalising any recommendations, the DHR Panel should discuss these with the organisations concerned. This is in order to agree the final recommendation so that all parties are clear about the purpose of the recommendation, what is expected by it and that the appropriate technical or organisational language is used. DASV Manager will present draft report to Bexley DLT, Adults & Children's Directorates & Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).
- On issuing the final report with agreed recommendations BCSP should send the recommendations to the relevant named Chief Officer and outline when it is they expect to receive a response.
- On receipt of a positive response from the Home Office's Quality Assurance Panel, BCSP will report to the next available meeting of the BCSP Board with a brief overview report along with the recommendations from the DHR. This information will in turn be shared with the Domestic Abuse Partnership and Safeguarding Boards at their next meeting.
- A link to the published DHR report will be put up on the London Borough of Bexley website's Community Safety pages, with the site acting as a central resource for the DHRs that have taken place.
- On behalf of BCSP the DASV Strategy Manager will maintain a spreadsheet of all the DHRs that have or are taking place in Bexley. This will require the DASV Strategy Manager requesting progress updates on the review, the report and the implementation of actions. Also, will provide a report showing an overview of progress on the delivery of recommendations, quarterly, as a standing item to the BCSP Board. The spreadsheet and the overview report will also be routinely shared with the Children and Adults Safeguarding Boards, Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and others as required.
- The BCSP Board will also receive from the DASV Strategy Manager:
    - an update on progress of implementation of recommendations 6 months after the report has been published, and
    - will demonstrate how that learning has been embedded in practice which will be shared with both Safeguarding Boards and Domestic Abuse Partnership.
- Key learning from Children Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and Adult Serious Adult Reviews (SAR) will be shared with the BCSP and Domestic Abuse Partnership via the Multi Agency Learning Forum (MALF).
- At least once a year the DASV Strategy Manager will organise an event, such as a learning seminar, to help spread the learning and influence improvements in practice particularly amongst practitioners.

Further guidance on DHR work in other areas can be found at **Appendix C**.

Refer to **Appendix D** for the key stages of a DHR and process flow chart at **Appendix E**.

Appendix A - Links to useful resources/leaflets/templates/websites

Multi-Agency statutory guidance for the conduct of DHRs: This is core statutory guidance and required reading. It contains useful templates for DHR reports, action plans and internal management reviews in order to meet the criteria for the quality assurance panel requirements.

DHRs key findings from research: This Government report contains information about risk assessments, information sharing and multi-agency working and suggestions for what can be done locally.

Home Office DHR review toolkit – Guide to overview report writing: A guide to writing an overview report for a DHR that includes:

- Accountability and quality assurance
- Preparation
- Key procedural issues
- General advice on drafting the overview report
- Using the guidance 'outline format for the overview report'
- National analysis

Criteria for considering a DHR report

Conducting a DHR: Online learning for frontline practitioners

DHR Quality Assurance Panel Terms of Reference: This panel has the responsibility for quality assuring all overview reports for domestic homicide reviews conducted under the statutory guidance.

Templates

- DHR: Home Office Community Safety Partnership reporting form
- DHR Information: Leaflet for employers and colleagues
- DHR Information: Leaflet for family
- DHR Information: Leaflet for friends
- DHR Information: Leaflet for friends (other languages)

Links to websites and further reading

- Government's Ending Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy: 2016 to 2020

More information about coercive and controlling behaviours in an intimate family relationship

- Bexley Domestic Abuse Services : London Borough of Bexley website that has been developed by the Bexley Domestic Abuse Partnership to provide support and guidance for local residents.
- Solace Women's Aid : Offers free advice and support to women and children in London to build safe and strong lives. Futures free from abuse and violence.

- SafeLives : Formerly known as CAADA, is a national charity supporting a multi-agency and risk-led response to domestic abuse. SafeLives provide practical help to support professionals and organisations working with domestic abuse victims.
- Home | Women and Girls Network (wgn.org.uk) This is a free, women-only service that supports women in London who have experienced violence or are at risk of violence. They offer counselling, advocacy and advice for women and girls who have experienced gendered violence, including sexual and domestic violence.
- Respect : This is the leading UK organisation working with domestic abuse perpetrators, male victims and young people.
- https://www.galop.org.uk/ **The National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline** is available Monday-Friday 10am-5pm and Wednesday-Thursday 10am-8pm to give advice and support for people who have experienced domestic abuse, as well as professionals. It can be reached by calling **0800 999 5428** or emailing help@galop.org.uk
- https://aafda.org.uk/ AAFDA has over a decade of experience advocating for families after the homicide, suicide or unexplained death of their family member or friend.

Appendix B – Notification: Domestic Homicide Review

Bexley Community Safety Partnership must be notified of any incident where there may be a statutory duty to complete a domestic homicide review.

Referrer details:

Date of referral	
Name of referrer	
Role	
Agency	
Address	
Telephone number	
Email	

When a domestic homicide occurs, the relevant police force or other agency should inform the relevant Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in writing of the incident. Overall responsibility for establishing a review rests with the local CSP as they are ideally placed to initiate a DHR and review panel due to their multi-agency design and locations across England and Wales. CSPs are made up of representatives from the 'responsible authorities' (police, local authorities, fire and rescue authorities, probation service and health) who work together to protect their local communities from crime and help people feel safer.

Under section 9(1) of the 2004 Act, a domestic homicide review means a 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. a person to whom he/she was related or with whom he/she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or
b. a member of the same household as himself, or
c. where a victim took their own life (suicide) and the circumstances give rise to concern, for example it emerges that there was coercive controlling behaviour in the relationship, a review should be undertaken, even if a suspect is not charged with an offence or they are tried and acquitted. Reviews are not about who is culpable.

Please add additional lines below if there is more than one victim / perpetrator / child:

Victim(s) details

Full name of victim	
Any aliases	
DOB / Age	
Gender	
Ethnicity	
Sexual Orientation	
Disability	
Address (including postcode)	
School/nursery	

Alleged/perpetrator's details

Full name of alleged/perpetrator	
Any aliases	
DOB / Age	
Gender	
Ethnicity	
Address (including postcode)	
Relationship to Victim	

Child(ren) details

Full name of Child		
Any aliases		
DOB / Age		
Gender		
Ethnicity		
Sexual Orientation		
Disability		
Address (including postcode)		
School/nursery		

Notification details

Please outline circumstances leading to notification. Also include if any other review is being undertaken e.g., internal agency review; any action being taken as a result of this incident.

BCSP Held on	
Notification to Home Office date	
Decision	

Notification to be emailed to Bexley Community Safety Partnership at: Community.safety@bexley.gov.uk

Appendix C - Further guidance on DHR work in other areas

Prepare ahead

- Consider local arrangements within your CSP, individual agencies and services and across other areas well before you are ever called upon to undertake a DHR. When the call comes there will be immense pressures to deal with it.
- Consider how the Partnership will fund a DHR including the costs of an independent chair and report author.
- Consider and plan for equality and diversity factors including language issues and cultural factors. Ensure these are reflected throughout the DHR and you have planned for appropriate additional support to the DHR process.
- Panel members should consider a wide range of statutory and non-statutory services and agencies, including the voluntary and specialist sectors, as they may have been involved with or have considerable knowledge to add to a DHR panel. They may either be core members or invited attendees for particular discussions. Developing a wide range of relationships locally to facilitate this will help you when the time comes. The skills and knowledge of the panel significantly enhance and complement those of the chair and they should be well drawn on during the DHR.
- Consider how you will service a DHR, for example:
    - Minute takers and administrative staff. Can they be drawn from internal corporate business support, council committee support or from other partner agencies or elsewhere?
    - Do you have access to:
        - report writers with clear training and skills
        - internal management review report writers with clear skills and training
        - staff to fulfil the other and varied functions that may arise
        - consider how will you manage the media management responsibilities

The victim at the heart of the DHR

- Always remember that they were a person with a personal and private life. An experienced DHR chair explained that showing a photograph, sensitively and appropriately, of the deceased to the DHR panel at the first and subsequent panel meetings helped with this aspect.
- Undertake your work from the premise that the deceased had friends and loved ones. They have their own memories and they will want lessons to be learned and acted upon to make their loss achieve some positive outcomes for others. You should make every effort to work with them as appropriate and liaise with them about this statutory DHR process. They will read the report, so make your work worthy of their memories and of the deceased.
- Plan how you will involve family and significant others early in your work as Home Office guidance urge you to look at this. You will need to think when the time will be right, how it fits with court proceedings and who from amongst the review panel is best placed to undertake activity with tact and sensitivity. You may wish to consider involving external domestic abuse services in supporting you in this task.
- Having a panel member with clear knowledge of domestic abuse and the impact that it can have on victims and others is key.
- Considering the wide range of agencies, services and individuals that may have associations with the case and have relevant knowledge and information to share with the DHR at the start. Reviewing whether others need to be invited as work progresses is prudent and advised best practice.
- Create clear Terms of Reference, appropriate and proportionate to the nature of the review and continual reference to them will help keep the DHR on track. These may need to be adjusted in discussion with the Home Office if appropriate. The parameters of the review in terms of breadth of agencies or the time period to be covered may also need to be monitored as information develops on the case.
- Appointing a chair with the most appropriate knowledge skills and strengths to manage the DHR is key. They do not need to meet all the criteria in the Home Office guidance and indeed this is unlikely in one person but their skills should be complemented by those of the panel. The chair can also be mentored by people outside the immediate DHR.
- Give serious consideration to appointing a report author; someone with the skill to draw together a wide range of information and create a clear and concise narrative about the review, its finding, learning and the recommendations.
- The role of the DHR Chair can be greatly assisted by a well-balanced and well-informed panel consider representatives from a wide sphere. When listing the panel in overarching reports and papers, provide their names and roles.

Support to panel members

Remember that all staff involved in the DHR or otherwise affected by it may need support regardless of their professional experience. The information disclosed at Panel meetings maybe distressing or upsetting that could trigger an emotional response and panel members should be assured that confidential support is readily available.

Report and action plan

- Keep chronologies to a practical and readable length whilst still covering the key salient points in an accessible format.
- Where information about other children, dependents or significant others are mentioned in a chronology or case report, ensure that it is clear to readers who they are, how they fit in the scenario and how it affected them, and what has since happened to them as appropriate in order to try to avoid leaving unanswered questions in the mind of a subsequent reader.
- The actions in the action plan need:
    - A clearly identified lead agency and named individual.
    - The BCSP DASV Strategy Manager will be the single point of contact within the CSP who is responsible for overseeing progress against the action plan and reporting back to BCSP Board and others.
    - To have been agreed with that agency/service and that the assigned lead is the correct one
    - The DHR Panel to develop the DHR Action Plan and have it formally agreed by the CSP
    - All key issues identified in the report must have an associated recommendation
    - The action plan will be shared with the Multi-Agency Learning Forum to assist with joint ownership of actions.
    - Actions need to be formally passed to those who will complete them at a senior level also advising the responsible officers.
- Clear lines of communications about progress need to be maintained between the officer coordinating the action plan in the local CSP area and those undertaking actions.
- Actions in cases where individuals were not known: Recommendations and actions should still be carefully considered in cases where the victim or others were not known to services, as valuable future improvements to practice may still be identified.
- Bexley's DHR Steering Group will monitor the action plan and feedback to BCSP, Shield and Adult Safeguarding Board. In Bexley the MALF (multi agency learning forum) holds quarterly meetings to discuss the recommendations and lessons learnt all statutory reviews.
- Adopt a professional and open tone in your reports and recommendations. The aim of a DHR is not to apportion blame but to identify how future practice can be improved. Report writers need to consider the tone and style thoughtfully to reflect careful consideration of how the facts and issues impact on future practice and present that clearly and neutrally.
- Accuracy and factual correctness is vital. Ensure you have recorded correctly and that legislation, policy and practice is cited accurately.
- Submit the final report to the Home Office's DHR Quality Assurance Panel. This panel has the responsibility for quality assuring all overview reports for domestic homicide reviews conducted under the statutory guidance.

Dissemination of learning

DHRs are a vital source of information to inform national and local policy and practice.

All agencies involved have a responsibility to identify and disseminate common themes and trends across review reports, and act on any lessons identified to improve practice and safeguard victims. To derive value from the DHR process and prevent further abuse and homicide, local areas should have governance mechanisms in place for monitoring delivery against DHR action plans. CSPs should satisfy themselves that an appropriate framework is in place.

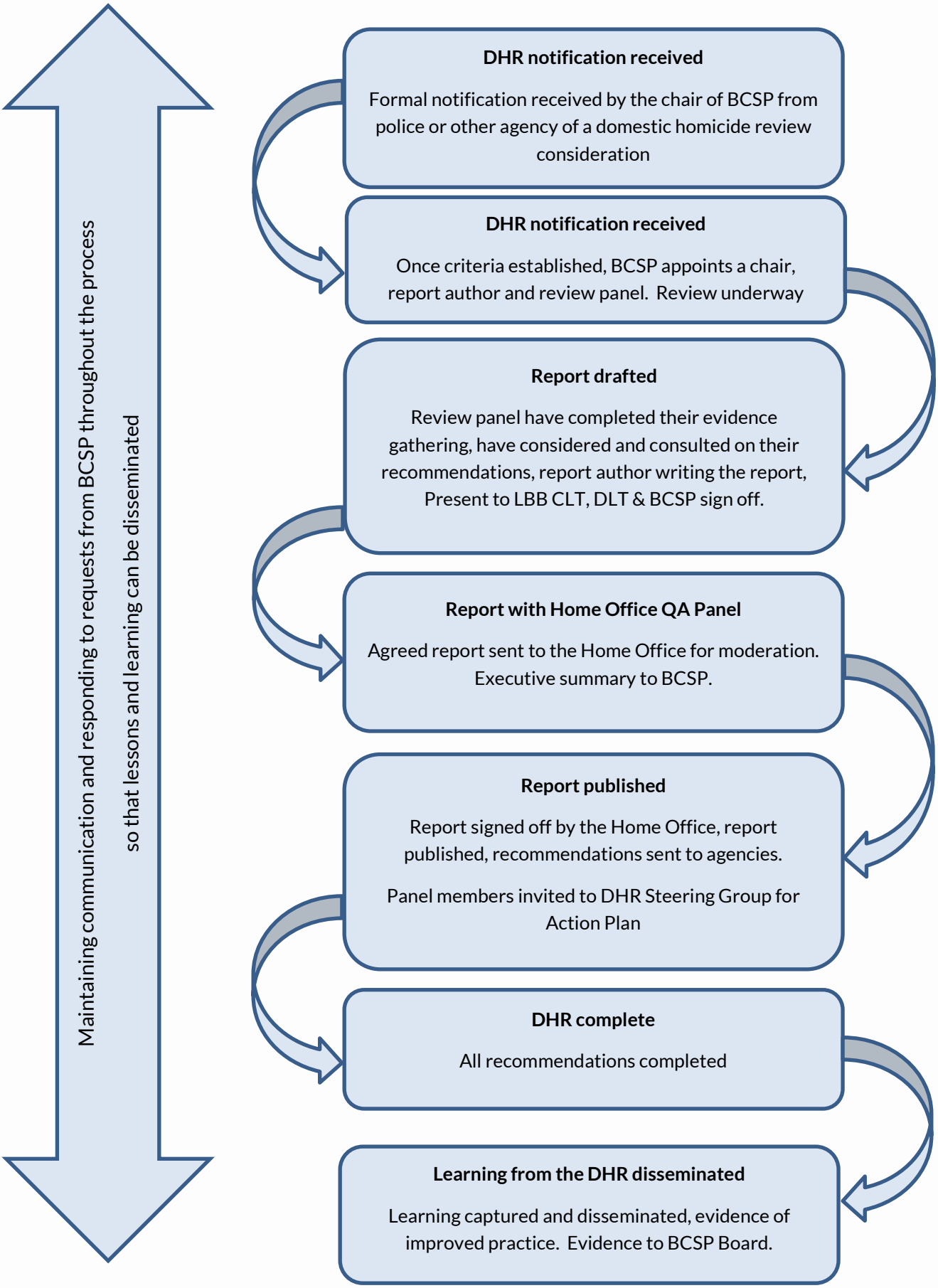
It is important to draw out key findings of DHRs and their implications for policy and practice. The following may assist in achieving maximum benefit from the DHR process:

- As far as possible, the review should be conducted in such a way that the process is seen as a learning exercise and not as a way of apportioning blame.
- Consider what type and level of information needs to be disseminated, how and to whom, in the light of the review. Be prepared to communicate both examples of good practice and areas where change is required.
- Subsequent learning should be disseminated to the local MARAC, other multi-agencies, the Safeguarding Adult Board, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and commissioners of services.
- Share and incorporate the learning (including any national lessons learnt) across the strands of adult and children safeguarding and utilise into local and regional training programmes for frontline staff.

Establish a culture of learning lessons by having a standing agenda item for DHRs on the meetings of CSP and domestic violence forums and similar groups.

Appendix D - DHR key stages flow chart

Note: The below flow chart may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. To view an accessible version of the flow chart, see Appendix D - DHR key stages flow chart (accessible).


Maintaining communication and responding to requests from BCSP throughout the process
so that lessons and learning can be disseminated
DHR notification received
Formal notification received by the chair of BCSP from police or other agency of a domestic homicide review consideration
DHR notification received
Once criteria established, BCSP appoints a chair, report author and review panel. Review underway
Report drafted
Review panel have completed their evidence gathering, have considered and consulted on their recommendations, report author writing the report, Present to LBB CLT, DLT & BCSP sign off.
Report with Home Office QA Panel
Agreed report sent to the Home Office for moderation. Executive summary to BCSP.
Report published
Report signed off by the Home Office, report published, recommendations sent to agencies.
Panel members invited to DHR Steering Group for Action Plan
DHR complete
All recommendations completed
Learning from the DHR disseminated
Learning captured and disseminated, evidence of improved practice. Evidence to BCSP Board.

Appendix D - DHR key stages flow chart (accessible)

Maintaining communication and responding to requests from BCSP throughout the process so that lessons and learning can be disseminated.

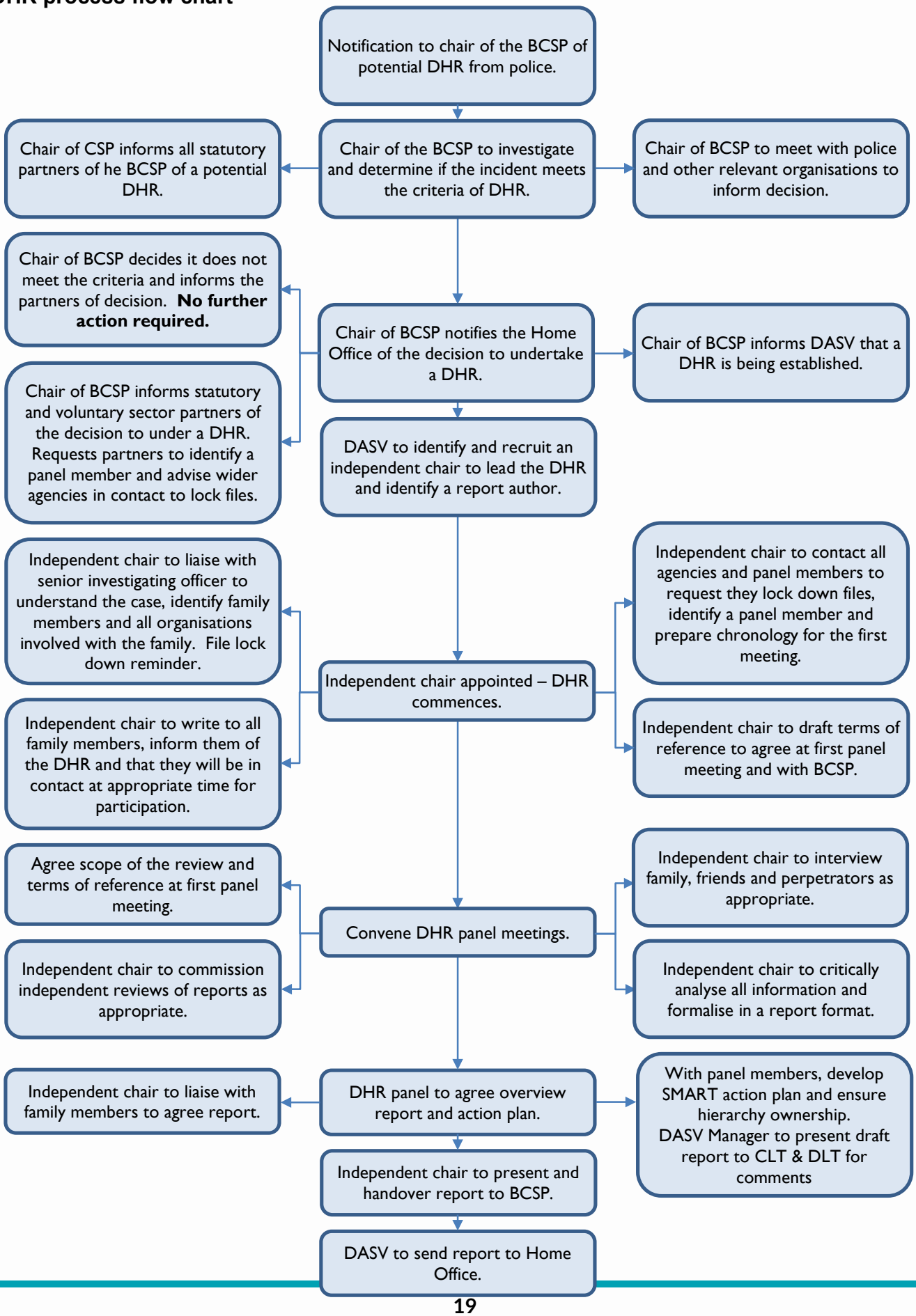
Flowchart:

- **DHR notification received -** Formal notification received by the chair of BCSP from police or other agency of a domestic homicide review consideration.
- **DHR notification received -** Once criteria established, BCSP appoints a chair, report author and review panel. Review underway.
- **Report drafted -** Review panel have completed their evidence gathering, have considered and consulted on their recommendations, report author writing the report, Present to LBB CLT, DLT & BCSP sign off.
- **Report with Home Office QA Panel -** Agreed report sent to the Home Office for moderation. Executive summary to BCSP.
- **Report published -** Report signed off by the Home Office, report published, recommendations sent to agencies. Panel members invited to DHR Steering Group for Action Plan.
- **DHR complete** - All recommendations completed
- **Learning from the DHR disseminated** - Learning captured and disseminated, evidence of improved practice. Evidence to BCSP Board.

Appendix E - DHR process flow chart

Note: The below flow chart may not be suitable for users of assistive technology. To view an accessible version of the flow chart, see Appendix E - DHR process flow chart (accessible).

DHR process flow chart



Appendix E - DHR process flow chart (accessible)

- **Process 1** - Notification to chair of the BCSP of potential DHR from police.
- **Process 2** - Chair of the BCSP to investigate and determine if the incident meets the criteria of DHR.
- **Process 2a** - Chair of CSP informs all statutory partners of the BCSP of a potential DHR. Or
- **Process 2b** - Chair of BCSP to meet with police and other relevant organisations to inform decision.
- **Process 3** - Chair of BCSP notifies the Home Office of the decision to undertake a DHR.
- **Process 3a** - Chair of BCSP decides it does not meet the criteria and informs the partners of decision. **No further action required**. **End of DHR process**
- **Process 3b** - Chair of BCSP informs statutory and voluntary sector partners of the decision to under a DHR. Requests partners to identify a panel member and advise wider agencies in contact to lock files.
- **Process 3c** - Chair of BCSP informs DASV that a DHR is being established.
- **Process 4** - DASV to identify and recruit an independent chair to lead the DHR and identify a report author.
- **Process 5** - Independent chair appointed - DHR commences.
- **Process 5a** - Independent chair to liaise with senior investigating officer to understand the case, identify family members and all organisations involved with the family. File lock down reminder.
- **Process 5b** - Independent chair to write to all family members, inform them of the DHR and that they will be in contact at appropriate time for participation.
- **Process 5c** - Independent chair to contact all agencies and panel members to request they lock down files, identify a panel member and prepare chronology for the first meeting.
- **Process 5d** - Independent chair to draft terms of reference to agree at first panel meeting and with BCSP.
- **Process 6** - Convene DHR panel meetings.
- **Process 6a** - Agree scope of the review and terms of reference at first panel meeting.
- **Process 6b** - Independent chair to commission independent reviews of reports as appropriate.
- **Process 6c** - Independent chair to interview family, friends and perpetrators as appropriate.
- **Process 6d** - Independent chair to critically analyse all information and formalise in a report format.
- **Process 7** - DHR panel to agree overview report and action plan.
- **Process 7a** – Independent chair to liaise with family members to agree report.
- **Process 7b** – With panel members, develop SMART action plan and ensure hierarchy ownership. DASV Manager to present draft report to CLT & DLT for comments
- **Process 8** - Independent chair to present and handover report to BCSP.
- **Process 9** - DASV to send report to Home Office.
- **End of DHR process**