



GOVERNMENT WHIPS' OFFICE
HOUSE OF LORDS
LONDON SW1A 0PW

LORD SHARPE OF EPSOM OBE
020 7219 3778
GOVERNMENT WHIP FOR DCMS, FCDO
AND HO

Telephone 020 7219 3131
www.lordswhips.org.uk
holgovernmentwhips@parliament.uk

15 November 2021

Dear Lord Falconer

POLICE, CRIME, SENTENCING AND COURTS BILL: DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS

I am writing to follow up the Committee stage debate on 27 October on your amendment 78 about Domestic Homicide Reviews (Official Report, columns 847-852).

Amendment 78 sought to amend section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (the "2004 Act") to require the Secretary of State to direct a Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) in circumstances as outlined in that section. The new clause also aimed to improve data collection methodologies around Domestic Homicide Reviews including number of reviews conducted annually, the time taken, and for that data to be recorded and published annually.

I would like to reassure you again that DHRs are conducted in the great majority of cases, but there may be instances where a DHR is not appropriate or necessary. The Government is clear that DHRs should be considered at every opportunity and the 2004 Act already makes provision for the Secretary of State of the Home Department to direct that a DHR takes place where required. Where a Community Safety Partnership make a decision not to conduct a review, the decision is closely scrutinised and escalated to the Home Secretary to enable her to use her powers to direct a DHR if appropriate.

In regards to data collection, I would like to reiterate that the Home Office has committed to creating an online central repository of DHR reports to ensure all DHRs are accessible to the public and to enable greater analysis of patterns and trends to allow us to better develop our understanding of the triggers and causes of domestic homicide and the ways these horrific crimes can be prevented. This is expected to go live next year.

Separately, I committed to respond further to your follow-up questions on firstly, the number of domestic homicides that had been the subject of a DHR in the last two years, and secondly, the number that had not, and the grounds for this. On the first point, a total of 93 DHRs were considered by the independent Quality Assurance Panel in 2019, with 96 being considered in 2020 and 87 between January 2021 –

September 2021. There were a total of three cases that were escalated to the Home Office and it was agreed a DHR was not necessary in 2019, 11 in 2020 and seven from January 2021. Since March 2021 there has been four instances where the Home Secretary has directed a DHR is undertaken.

I am afraid I am not in a position to provide information on the individual cases. However, I can share that recent cases involved distant family relationships with no evidence of domestic abuse, a homicide which involved two people who lived in a shared house, with no evidence of domestic abuse or an intimate relationship, and a case where the perpetrator and victim were distantly related but had had no contact for over five years. In these cases, we were assured that other reviews, learning events and action plans would be undertaken to ensure learning for local agencies is implemented.

I hope that the clarifications set out above provide further assurance that the government considers all matters in relation to Domestic Homicide Reviews seriously.

You also asked about the terms of reference of the Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review. These were published on 2 November and are available at: [Domestic Homicide Sentencing Review: Terms of Reference - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-homicide-sentencing-review-terms-of-reference).

I am copying this letter to Lord Rosser, Lord Coaker, Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle and Lord Paddick. I am also placing a copy in the library of the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sharpe of Epsom". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LORD SHARPE OF EPSOM OBE

The Lord Falconer of Thoroton
House of Lords