

**RE: 'Samina' DHR**

Thank you very much for your letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 in relation to the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) for *Samina*, and for the positive comments and constructive recommendations contained within it.

Whilst this was not requested I feel it may be helpful to provide a response to the QA Panel's observations and recommendations:

1. The report does not follow the template in the statutory guidance and this made it difficult to follow. For example, there is no clear combined chronology within the report to give a concise sequence of events.

We acknowledge this important and accurate observation, and that it would have been helpful to the QA Panel for this DHR report to have been written utilising more fully the template provided in the statutory guidance at the time. Since this report was submitted many positive changes have taken place in relation to DHR procedures to ensure adherence to the updated *Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews – December 2016*. We shall continue to endeavour to make all future DHR reports easy to follow in accordance with the guidance.

2. The Panel felt the report missed the opportunity to identify a recommendation around effective housing policy (page 37).

The following response has been received from the DHR lead within the Housing Access Team. This colleague had no involvement in the original IMR from Housing but was happy to provide an update having familiarised herself with the report.

"I can confirm that the Council's Housing Options Service Domestic Violence and Abuse Protocol have been reviewed since this homicide took place, and now clearly makes reference to the Housing Options service signposting victims to appropriate support services (see section 10 of DV Protocol attached).

I can also confirm that the Council presented an item on domestic abuse to the Bradford Housing Associations Liaison Group (BHALG) meeting on 23 March 2015, which included an overview of domestic abuse, domestic homicide reviews, and the role of social landlords in helping to support domestic abuse victims. At that meeting, the Registered Provider landlords present were asked to confirm if they had up to date domestic abuse policies in place and to ensure they were reviewed to include latest good practice. Those present gave their verbal confirmation at the meeting.

The largest Registered Provider landlord within the district is Incommunities, who manage around two-thirds of the social housing stock within the district. Incommunities has a comprehensive domestic abuse policy, which is subject to review every two years in accordance with its cycle of policy reviews. The current version of their policy has clear aims to raise awareness of, detect and provide support for domestic abuse for all its customers, whether new or existing. The notion of domestic violence is referred to within their starter Tenancy Agreements. Incommunities have produced a domestic abuse toolkit for staff to utilise, committed to a multi-agency approach to tackling domestic abuse and provide training and publicity campaigns on a regular basis.

Since this domestic homicide occurred, a number of improvements have been made within housing generally, in relation to domestic abuse. The Housing Options service was brought back in-house by Bradford Council in 2014, which means that all Housing Options staff now complete the Council's own domestic abuse training course as mandatory, along with other appropriate

safeguarding training and refresher sessions. A comprehensive system of case file review and supervision has been implemented within the Housing Options service, to highlight any issues with staff missing opportunities to identify or signpost support for domestic abuse victims. The district's Housing Allocations Policy continues to prioritise clients fleeing domestic abuse, and provides the option for clients to either apply for rehousing via the Domestic Violence and Abuse protocol, or make a homelessness application. The latest review of the Housing Allocations Policy, due to be presented to the Council's Executive in September 2017, maintains priority for domestic abuse victims and enhances priority for high-risk victims subject to MARAC.

It is difficult to comment further on the role of Registered Providers and other housing providers in tackling domestic abuse. Registered Providers (RPs) are all wholly independent organisations from the Council, although they do work closely in partnership with the Council's housing and other key services. The Council does not have any powers to compel changes to individual RPs' policies or practices. In future domestic homicides, where there has been significant involvement from an RP, it would be more appropriate to involve that RP directly in the DHR process, rather than the Council's Housing service as a third party.

On the basis of my feedback above, I do not suggest that any further recommendations for housing need to be included in the DHR report."

3. The action plan requires updating and is missing key information such as target dates and outcomes.

The DHR Standing Panel in Bradford has now undertaken to collate, and RAG rate, all DHR targets, actions and outcomes as a standardised method of ensuring actions are undertaken and reviewed as per the statutory guidance. This work will include all of the actions set out within this report's Action Plan and any outcomes/completion dates available at time of publication will be added to the final published version. In order to avoid any further delays in the publication of the report any information pertaining to these actions received after publication will be added to an updated Action Plan which will be published in the same website location as your original letter, this response and the DHR report itself.

4. The Panel noted that there was no voluntary sector representation on the review panel and felt it

Voluntary sector representatives are now routinely invited to contribute to DHRs in Bradford. However, it should be noted that there is some concern that dependent on the number and frequency of DHRs that need to be undertaken at any given time, specialist voluntary sector contribution could be affected by issues of capacity.

I hope that the above provides a useful update on the progress that has been made, and will continue to be made, in relation to how Domestic Homicide Reviews are conducted within the Bradford district, and that it acknowledges, and addresses, the comments and recommendations contained within the Quality Assurance Panel's feedback.

As requested in your letter, we will be sure to notify your office via email (including the URL) once *Samina's* DHR report is published.

Yours Sincerely

Development Officer (CBMDC)