



Home Office

Public Protection Unit  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

T: 020 7035 4848  
[www.gov.uk/homeoffice](http://www.gov.uk/homeoffice)

Julie Smith  
Associate Policy Lead for Community Safety  
Strategy, Partnerships and Transformation Directorate  
Civic Centre, Room 3.102  
Sunderland City Council  
Sunderland  
SR2 7DN

31 July 2019

Dear Julie,

Thank you for submitting the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) report for Sunderland (DHR3) to the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel. The report was considered by the Panel on 26 June 2019.

The Panel would like to thank you for conducting this review and for providing them with the final report.

The Panel found this to be an honest, transparent review which, in the absence of agency information, makes good use of all available sources from the police investigation and subsequent trial. The Panel commended, in particular, the efforts undertaken to seek contributions from family, friends, and colleagues of both the victim and the perpetrator. This included attending a staff meeting at the school where the victim worked to explain the purpose of the DHR and how they could help inform the final report.

The Panel made the following observations, however, which you will wish to consider addressing:

- Report findings must be evidence-based, with assumptions and conjecture avoided. The report currently states, for example, that the victim was not socially isolated, but there was actually evidence of this.
- A more rounded consideration of coercive and controlling behaviour is required. While the report currently highlights evidence of the perpetrator acting in this way, its focus on the criminal definition of coercive control, rather than looking at all aspects of his behaviour, could potentially deter the reader from identifying and responding to these behaviours in other instances.
- The report would benefit in places from more probing and robust challenge. It could, for example, explore the role schools play as an employer and whether there

is sufficient training in areas such as violence against women and girls to help staff recognise indicators of domestic abuse or coercive and controlling behaviour in relation to colleagues as well as children and parents. There is also no reference to gender, at present, in the report's consideration of equality and diversity issues.

- Recommendations should be reviewed to ensure they are specific, realistic, and achievable. As it currently reads, the recommendation that challenges the public sector is too broad, so needs amending.
- The report would benefit from another proof-read to ensure it adheres to the statutory guidance. This should include removing the gender of the victim's children to help protect their identity. The report should also be reviewed in terms of accuracy and language used. Recognising wider economic as well as financial abuse, for example, is essential, while typographical and referencing errors need to be corrected.
- Providing a brief explanation of the role performed by the lesser known organisations involved in this review and confirmation of their independence would be helpful.

The Panel would be grateful if you could please provide a revised version of the report. Please clearly indicate where changes have been made and make it clear in the subject line of your email when resubmitting that the documents contained are revised versions for reconsideration. Please let me know if this will prove difficult.

Yours sincerely

**Hannah Buckley**

Joint Chair of the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel