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Dear Deborah,

Thank you for submitting the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) report (Victoria) for Bexley Community Safety Partnership to the Home Office. Due to the COVID-19 situation the Quality Assurance (QA) Panel was unable to meet as scheduled on 22 July therefore the report was assessed by a virtual panel process. For the virtual panel, Panel members provided their comments by email, the Home Office secretariat summarised the feedback and the Panel agree the feedback.

The QA Panel commented that the report works hard to piece Victoria's life together, and what happened during her last 5 years does come through, but from the perspective of the issues facing her at any one time. The review acknowledges this, and that agencies saw her through the lens of those issues, rather than predominantly as a person. The 625 entries involving 22 agencies makes this point powerfully.

The combination of chronologies is helpful, and it also highlights how agencies focused on specific issues, rather than take a whole system approach. The focus on use of language is important, as it exposes bias on the part of the professionals. The return of IMRs for further work is to be commended. It has been suggested that the review could be used as a case study of how dynamic domestic abuse is.

The QA Panel felt that there are some aspects of the report which may benefit from further revision, but the Home Office is content that, on completion of these changes, the DHR may be published.

**Areas for final development include:**

- Use of language

- Some grammatical errors (para. 1.9.3)
  - Paragraph 2.2.2 states the term ex-partner is used in this review because we could not establish when they married, nor when/whether they separated permanently. However, the Review starts by using the reference 'ex-partner', but then from 3.2.2 it uses the reference 'ex husband' then goes on to refer to him as 'X'. In 3.3.2 the Review refers to him again as 'ex-partner'. For consistency please can one term be used throughout the report.
  - Consider using Victoria instead of 'Her'
  - The language used regarding the family not feeling able to engage could also do with being looked at, to make sure that there is no implicit blame coming through.
- Paragraph 1.9.3. highlights that there is no specific Home Office leaflet for DHR reviews where a victim died as a result of suicide. – There could have been a recommendation for HO to develop such leaflet.
  - On page 17 – there is a diagram demonstrating which agencies supported Victoria. Bottom right corner states - RBG Housing (liaison with Peabody and Refuge; referred Victoria to Thames Reach) – Could Refuge be with lower 'r' refuge so it's not confused with Refuge the organization (unless it is known that Refuge the charity, was in fact approached)
  - Paragraph 3.3.77 states 'A week later Peabody recorded contact with London Borough of Bexley Welfare Benefits service reporting that Victoria had left the refuge due to an altercation with a key worker; she had therefore made herself intentionally homeless by leaving the refuge and would need to present to Royal Borough of Greenwich. Peabody spoke with Victoria after this; she reported she was sofa surfing and appeared to have no intention of returning to the Peabody property.' – The term 'intentionally homeless' is used in Homelessness Code of Guidance to describe a particular set of circumstances a person may find themselves in, which impacts on the support and assistance Local Authorities can provide. A person cannot be made intentionally homeless by leaving temporary accommodation (through their choice or being evicted). Could the panel clarify if they are using the term 'intentionally homeless' in a way that is defined in the guidance or whether they just described Victoria's situation at that particular time. Maybe for clarity they could change the term, so that it doesn't cause confusion. If the term is used as intended in the guidance; the review would benefit from considering this further in the analysis.
  - Paragraph 3.3.113 states that Victoria was referred to NCDV and was going to apply for a restraining order – Should this say non-molestation order?
  - Paragraph 3.3.22 – Following the incident police referred Victoria to the IDVA; there are no records as to whether contact was made. Can a comment be made in relation to best practice around record keeping – all contact attempts should be recorded.
  - Paragraph 3.3.26 – states - she informed them she wanted to be re-admitted to the psychiatric ward. – Can clarification be given as to if she was re-admitted or not.
  - Paragraph 3.3.27 – (clients cannot access the IAPT service whilst under the care of Oxleas) – It is not clear what IAPT refers to: (Improving access to psychological therapies).
  - Paragraph 3.3.30 – Can clarification be given as to why this MARAC action was marked as incomplete and if this needed follow up. MARAC coordinators should have a system for chasing outstanding actions and any incomplete actions should have a rationale for why these did not happen.
  - Paragraph 3.3.40 – can the report clarify if any action or support was carried out when social care was unable to obtain additional information from the Her Centre.

- Paragraph 3.3.121 – Can confirmation be given if the consideration of a DVPO was for X or V.?
- Paras: 3.3.124, 3.3.125, 3.3.127 – Could these statements be clarified as there is Paragraphs confusion surrounding the dates mentioned and when bail conditions were set. (3.3.125) end of May 2017, (3.3.125) the day after the end of May 2017, but remanded to court in August 2017, (3.3.127) early June 2017.
- Paragraphs 3.3.131, 3.3.132 – can a comment be added around the threshold for remanding someone into custody following repeated breaches of bail.
- Paragraph 3.3.134 refers to the non-extension of bail conditions in court, the Panel suggested a comment be added around domestic abuse training within magistrate courts to ensure that they are up to date on domestic abuse training.
- No mention of considering evidence led prosecutions, although notes cases where there was no corroborating evidence and Victoria withdrawing her allegations.
- Issue with the action plan:
  - There are some powerful recommendations in the review, but these are not optimised in the action plan. The Panel were pleased to see the words “escalation”, 6.8 and “assurance”, 6.9 included, but there is no further detail on how these could be actioned; other recommendations fall back on the usual training and learning approaches that provide no assurance around the embedding of improved practice.
  - Action plan has track changes – these need to be accepted/rejected and the plan needs to be updated with completed actions.
- The Panel would like to see explicit reference to this being a whole system issue, with information sharing and professional curiosity being worked through in this way.

Once completed the Home Office would be grateful if you could provide us with a digital copy of the revised final version of the report with all finalised attachments and appendices and the weblink to the site where the report will be published. Please ensure this letter is published alongside the report.

Please send the digital copy and weblink to [DHREnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:DHREnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk). This is for our own records for future analysis to go towards highlighting best practice and to inform public policy.

On behalf of the QA Panel, I would like to thank you, the report chair and author, and other colleagues, for the considerable work that you have put into this review.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Robinson  
**Chair of the Home Office Quality Assurance Panel**