**SUBJECT: FUNDING AGREEMENT FOR DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS**

**MEETING: Gwent Public Services Board**

**DATE: 27th March 2025**

*Report prepared by Michelle Chaplin (**Detective Superintendent Gwent Police / Co-Chair of Case Review Group), Kelly Richards (Gwent Safeguarding Board Business Manager) and Amy Thomas, (VAWDASV Regional Lead Advisor).*

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| **1.** | **Area Affected** |
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| 1.1 | Gwent wide |
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| **2.** | **Purpose of Report** |
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| 2.1 | To seek agreement to the funding of future Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) across Gwent. |
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| **3.** | **Background** |
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| 3.1  3.2  3.3  3.4  3.5 | A **Domestic Homicide Review** (DHR) is a locally conducted multi-agency **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 member of the same household as himself or herself.  DHR’s are a statutory requirement by the Home Office and remain the statutory responsibility of Community Safety Partnerships across England and Wales. Traditionally, the cost of the DHR process has been borne by the CSP within the Local Authority area where the review is taking place, usually by the statutory members of that board responsible for community safety. They are Local Authority, Police, Health Authority, Probation services and South Wales Fire and Rescue service.  DHRs to date have been commissioned out to external independent chairs and authors and the average cost of a DHR is c. £13,000. DHR Panel meetings are resourced by multi-agency representatives but chaired by the external author.  From 1st October 2024, Single Unified Safeguarding Reviews were implemented in Wales, creating a single review process for Adult Practice Reviews, Child Practice Reviews, Domestic Homicide Reviews, Mental Health Homicide Reviews and Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews.  The [Single Unified Safeguarding Review (SUSR): statutory guidance](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-09/single-unified-safeguarding-review-statutory-guidance.pdf) sets out the SUSR process and provides specific direction when the review relates to a domestic homicide. As the statutory responsibility for Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHR) remains with the respective Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) under section 9(3) of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act, 2004, the guidance outlines the specific roles of partnerships in such circumstances. |
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| **4.** | **Funding** |
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| 4.1  4.2  4.3  4.4 | To support the effective implementation of SUSRs in our region, Gwent Safeguarding Board will use its well-established structure, incorporating Business Unit resources and support, alongside the regional trained chairs and reviewers list. This existing practice enables the resourcing of reviews with experienced, trained and independent chairs, reviewers and panel members, at no cost to an agency or organisation. However, there may be occasions when a cost for an independent, external chair or reviewer is incurred, either due to capacity challenges or due to the complexities of the particular review.  In July 2024, Welsh Government wrote to the chairs of CSPs across Wales to reference their role in SUSRs and to provide advice on future funding arrangements. *Please see appendix 1 for a copy of this letter for your information.* It outlines that, “presently when a domestic homicide occurs, and it is agreed that a DHR should be undertaken, the CSP co-ordinates the funding for the review. In the future, when a SUSR is to be undertaken as a consequence of a domestic homicide, the CSP should help fund delivery of that review in partnership with the Safeguarding Board.”  At Gwent Safeguarding Board’s Case Review Group meeting on 12th November 2024, with CSP Lead Managers in attendance, it was acknowledged that some CSPs in Gwent have existing funding formulas which they have previously used in order to collectively fund DHRs, whilst others do not.  Therefore, in order to support consistency across the region and prevent any future delays in the commissioning of a review, Gwent Safeguarding Board is keen to establish an arrangement with Gwent Public Service Board reflecting Community Safety Partnership statutory requirements, at the earliest opportunity, that sets out a future funding agreement for SUSRs relating to a domestic homicide. |
| **5**  6.1  6.2  6.3 | **Proposal**  Although Gwent Safeguarding Board intends to consider the chair and reviewer options which do not incur costs in the first instance, it should be noted that, by exception, there may be occasions when it is not appropriate for a DHR to be commissioned in this way. At these times, a cost for an independent, external chair or reviewer may be incurred.  We would therefore welcome the PSB’s agreement and support for this funding model, to ensure that domestic homicide SUSR’s can continue to be established and managed in an effective way as we move forward under the new SUSR statutory guidance arrangements.  As there is an existing funding formula which is currently used successfully by some Gwent CSPs, we are seeking PSB agreement to adopt this approach across the region for funding all domestic homicide related SUSR’s for when, and where, additional costs are incurred. This current funding model - a five-way split of costs between the relevant CSP statutory partners of ABUHB, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, HMPPS, Gwent Police and the respective Local Authority – would enable a consistent and equitable approach to funding domestic homicide SUSR’s across the region. |
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| **7.** | **Consultation** |
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| 7.1 | The following have been consulted on this report and are supportive of the recommendations:   1. VAWDASV Board 2. CSP Lead Officers 3. Gwent Safeguarding Board chairpersons 4. Gwent Safeguarding Board Case Review Group |
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| **8.** | **Risks** |
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| 8.1  8.2  8.3 | There is the risk that without PSB agreement there would be a delay in undertaking the review as a result of the negotiations that would be needed. This would impact the timescales in which the SUSR would need to be undertaken as outlined in the statutory guidance.  There is the risk that without PSB agreement, there would be inconsistency in funding rates for SUSR DHR reviewers as LAs can set their own rates based on funding available.  There is the risk that without PSB agreement, safeguarding board/unit will be liable for paying the cost for SUSR DHR related reviews in the LAs that do not have an agreed funding formula. This is against WG guidance and there is not the costings/funds available for this. |
| **9.** | **Conclusion/summary** |
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| 9.1  9.2  9.3 | Funding of reviewers, where required, needs formal agreement to ensure they are undertaken in good time and limits the impact on families.  This process supports the professional approach to undertaking domestic-related SUSRs and puts in place relevant professionals and resources to ascertain the requirement and subsequent undertaking.  Clearly, this approach provides a more supportive, coordinated and professional safeguarding approach in regard to the undertaking of DHR’s. It offers a more timely approach, where lessons learned can be shared more quickly with a wider workforce, using a tested and well-established structure. This method also provides a single review process and therefore a more empathetic approach towards bereaved families. |
| **10.** | **Recommendation(s)** |
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| 10.1 | Gwent Public Service Board agrees to:  Agree the funding formula set out in 6.3 of this report when a reviewer cost arises in relation to a DHR in Gwent. |
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| **Appendices**  **Appendix 1** |  |
| **For a copy of the background papers or for further information about this report, please telephone:** | |