

Suzanne Harris
Senior Commissioning Officer (Interpersonal Violence)
Somerset County Council
Public Health, B3S,
County Hall,
Taunton,
TA1 4DY

29 March 2023

Dear Suzanne,

Thank you for submitting the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) report (Margaret) for the Safer Somerset Partnership to the Home Office Quality Assurance (QA) Panel. The report was considered at the QA Panel meeting on 25th January 2023. I apologise for the delay in responding to you.

The QA Panel felt that the report includes useful insights from Margaret's children, and that the inclusion of their views on the death of their mother was helpful in providing an understanding of their parents' long-standing relationship and the changes that they noticed as their mother and father grew older.

The impact of the first Covid-19 lockdown also comes through, which is helpful in providing context and an understanding of the effect of the pandemic on services and access to them for Margaret, her friends and family.

The report also helpfully pointed out that routine enquiries by health professionals is unlikely to take place in older victims and identified relevant factors of living in rural locations, such as lack of access to public links and longer distances to access health and social care services.

However, the QA Panel also 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:

- The equality and diversity section of the report could be improved. While age and gender are addressed, religion was not.

- Although the panel was made up of statutory organisations, there was no third sector representation such as Age Concern or Age UK. It would be helpful to understand why Age Concern, or another advocate for older people, was not invited to join, and why there was no representative from social care. The inclusion of job roles for panel members in 3.6 would also be helpful.
- The report reviews the period from Jan 2019 to the time of the Margaret's death in Oct 2022, there is no information as to why this specific timeframe was chosen. The couple were married for 45 years and moved into a rural village in 2002, exploring this wider context could help to inform the dynamics within their relationship.
- The inclusion of a public health representative was positive, although the recommendations around a public health approach for the future could be strengthened.
- The methodology section does not include details of when the Home Office (HO) and Margaret's family were informed of the decision to undertake a DHR; if the HO information document was shared with the family or if they were offered any support/advocacy to contribute to the process or what interviews were conducted.
- The action plan identified a number of key issues, but the recommendations lack outcomes, owners or milestones.
- The lack of the use of 'routine enquiry' by health professionals in older citizens is relevant, this is potentially a missed opportunity for victims to disclose DA.
- There are no references in Gerald's medical notes to any cognitive decline, mental health issues, anxiety/stress. It is unclear if this was explored at all, or just accepted at face value.
- It would be helpful to understand if any of Margaret's friends in the community or the perpetrator were invited to contribute. Given the medical issues, this may not have been possible, but it would be helpful to know if this was considered.
- The need to highlight the risks around someone's severe and deteriorating mental health, and the possibility of self-harm/ harm to others, is important.

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. This is for our own records for future analysis to go towards highlighting best practice and to inform public policy.

Please also send a digital copy to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner at DHR@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk

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,

Lynne Abrams

Chair of the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel