

Learning lessons after a homicide may seem low on the agenda of most forces when there are other pressing demands during these squeezed financial times. However, **Gillian Downham** at Sequeli thinks there are three reasons to be cheerful about domestic homicide reviews.

## Three reasons to be cheerful about domestic homicide reviews

### Good times for domestic homicide reviews

First, these are good times for domestic homicide reviews. They are in a strong procedural position. Section 9 of the Domestic Violence and Victims of Crime Act 2004, implemented in April 2011, has given them clear statutory force. They are backed up by a Multi-Agency Guidance. There is even a Home Office online training course in procedure. No other reviews and investigations in the public services have this.

### In a good position to take a lead

Second, domestic homicide reviews are in a good position to take a lead. With their structure settled, they contrast with children's serious case reviews which are still awaiting a new direction from the Department for Education following Professor Eileen Munro's review of child protection services and mental health investigations which will certainly face commissioning change following the Health and Social Care Bill.

What is more, new structures within the NHS are likely to have an impact on children's and vulnerable adults' serious case reviews. There will be a 'duty to promote integration' (Clause 20 at 13M of the current Bill) and it is envisaged by the Government that 'a whole pathway of integrated services' could be commissioned across health and social care (see the House of Lords on 22 November

2011 in Hansard at Column 1024).

Where do the police stand in all of this? Are they on the outside simply observing? No, where there are multi-agency issues – as is often the case in domestic homicide – domestic homicide reviews may offer the only clear structure within which to learn multi-agency lessons.

Moreover, where, for example, there are mental health, drug and alcohol issues, there could sometimes be a case for jointly commissioned reviews. Domestic homicide reviews are in a strong position to provide a lead in such circumstances

### Surprisingly, they can be morale boosters

Third, it might seem that financially this is not the moment to prioritise improvement of services. After all, survival is uppermost in everyone's mind. In fact it is exactly the right time.

Domestic homicide reviews, well conducted, provide an opportunity to reassure the public, police and victims that service quality is not being compromised during change and cutbacks. Surprisingly, they can be morale boosters since they provide a focus for service delivery, they have a human face and can give a sense of purpose to service improvement. This can be especially so if recommendations are followed through and victims' families involved.



### 'Excellent depth and breadth of speakers – inspirational'

Gillian Downham, Director of Sequeli, is enthusiastic about Sequeli's commitment to support for chairs, report writers and commissioners of domestic homicide reviews. They have a unique, multi-agency approach.

She selected some of the feedback from Sequeli's seminars in the summer of 2011:

- "Domestic homicide discussion very good."
- "All seminars were very useful. The discussion about which review process should be used when you have a mental health death that was a domestic homicide, was very good."
- "Excellent depth and breadth of speakers – inspirational."

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**Sequeli** is a not-for-profit company that provides training and support for reviews and investigations. It is running a specialist module on domestic homicide reviews on February 8, 2012. More information can be found on [www.sequeli.com](http://www.sequeli.com)

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