



Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Statutory Guidance Consultation: RCSLT response July 2024

Do you think there are any ways that the guidance could be improved overall?

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) welcome the guidance update, commends the work undertaken and supports its broad vision and aims. However, the RCSLT recommend that consideration be given to people with communication differences or needs due to their elevated risks of being a victim of homicide due to increased difficulty in disclosing abuse and accessing victim support. RCSLT believe the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Statutory Guidance could be further strengthened by:

- a clear acknowledgement of communication differences or needs as both a risk for experiencing abuse and homicide and a barrier to reporting and receiving victim support following domestic or sexual abuse or attempted homicide
- that subsequent action plans include details of how they are going to identify and support people with communication differences or needs;
- ensuring that good practice models and any guidance must include awareness of identification of and highlight appropriate support for communication differences or needs;
- ensuring the definition of 'domestic homicide' includes the provision of information and all communications relating to support being in accessible and inclusive formats;
- including, where appropriate, speech and language therapists as part of the multidisciplinary teams designing and providing prevention and support initiatives to ensure they are inclusive and appropriate to children, young people and adults with communication differences or needs.

Is there anything missing in the guidance that you would like to see included?

The RCSLT highlights the need for greater consideration of speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) throughout the DHR process. The RCSLT supports the overarching vision of ensuring effective support for affected individuals but raises concerns

about the absence of a dedicated focus on individuals with SLCN, who face heightened risks and barriers in accessing support due to their communication challenges or differences.

The RCSLT urges for explicit inclusion of SLCN considerations in all aspects of DHR. This includes support from speech and language therapists (SLTs) to assess and address the communication barriers that victims may have faced, which can often go unrecognised. The RCSLT also recommends that training for all individuals involved in DHR processes should include awareness of the specific vulnerabilities and needs of individuals with communication differences or difficulties, ensuring that these individuals are not further marginalised during the review process.

Furthermore, RCSLT advocates for amendments in the strategy to acknowledge that individuals with SLCN might be targeted by perpetrators due to their vulnerabilities and may suffer abuse for extended periods unnoticed. To counteract this, RCSLT suggests detailed plans that enhance accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that communication barriers do not hinder the investigation and review processes, enabling people affected to have a voice.

By focusing on these areas, the RCSLT believes that the DHR can become more effective in preventing future homicides and supporting the needs of all individuals, especially those with SLCN, thus reflecting a truly inclusive approach to tackling domestic homicide.

Do you have any comments on ‘Section 2.5 Scoping Review process’ in terms of content or clarity?

The RCSLT highlights the importance of recognising the specific needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), as well as the role of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs). The RCSLT suggests that DHR protocols should ensure that SLTs and other AHPs are involved in the reviews to address the complex communication and support needs of these vulnerable groups. This involvement would enable more effective identification, support, and prevention strategies that are tailored to the unique challenges faced by children with SEND and ensure that all communication barriers are adequately addressed during the review process. By incorporating these professionals, DHRs can be more comprehensive and sensitive to the nuances of cases involving individuals with specialised communication and support requirements.