**Methodology: Domestic Homicide: Interviews with families, survivors and professionals and analysis of domestic homicide reviews. Dates of study, 2019-2022.**

Introduction:

Learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews using Experience Based Co-Design, also known as Homicide Abuse Learning Together (HALT) was a three-year study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ES/S005471/2) and carried out by researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Central Lancashire and Liverpool John Moores University.

The study aimed to address important gaps in knowledge of domestic homicide and to learn from the experiences of families who had lost a relative to domestic homicide; victims/survivors of domestic abuse; professionals, and domestic homicide reviews (DHRs) to document, analyse, map, and influence policy and practice to prevent future domestic homicides. The key aim was to enhance policy and practice by improving methods for implementing the recommendations of domestic homicide reviews.

Domestic homicide is a global problem that disproportionately affects women. In 2017 alone 87,000 women were killed worldwide by a former or current intimate partner or a family member (UNODC, 2018). In England and Wales between April 2020 and March 2021 there were 114 domestic homicides, of which over half (67) were intimate partner homicides. Of these 85% (n=57) of victims were women (ONS, 2022). Men were principal suspects in 88% (n=100) of all domestic homicide cases (ONS, 2022).

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were introduced as a statutory requirement in England and Wales in 2011 to review the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect perpetrated by an intimate ex/partner, relative, or member of the same household (Home Office, 2016). A review is commissioned by the local Community Safety Partnership (in England) or Public Service Board (in Wales).

Data collection method:

The research project was made up of three work packages:

WP 1: a systematic literature review of international approaches to the review of domestic homicides. It is not included here but helped the team to i) identify key learning from international DHRs ii) investigate any initiatives from the DHRs, focusing on their impact. We also utilised a mixed methods approach to analyse 302 publicly available DHRs from Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in England & Wales.

WP 2: provided a large-scale analysis of DHRs as well as a focussed analysis of specific sub-sets which can be utilised to inform prevention and risk management of domestic abuse cases that may lead to homicide. Publicly available DHRS were collected from CSP websites. A team at Kings College London provided some assistance in the collation of DHR during the pilot study for the project by participating in a data swap with the project team. This entailed exchanging and pooling previously collected by each team.

WP 2 Data collection had two parts. First, we extracted data from the DHRS utilising a quantitative and a qualitative template to identify and extract variables from DHRs to feed into SPSS. Descriptive analysis was carried out to generate frequencies and proportions, with cross-tabulation of key variables. Statistical tests were also be used to identify key trends and risk factors. Second, we conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis of DHRs in relation to: i) adult family homicides; ii) complex cases where domestic abuse co-exists with substance misuse, mental health; ii) families with children under 18; iii) cases involving black and minoritised victims or perpetrators; iv) female perpetrators and v) homicide-suicide cases. We analysed the recommendations made in DHRs and created an open access repository of DHRs available at <https://domestichomicide-halt.co.uk/repository-landing>

WP 3: Employed an experience-based co-design (EBCD) approach, an innovative, action orientated methodology bringing an additional dimension to interrogate the utility, learning and future development of services from domestic homicide reviews. Gwent and Lancashire acted as study sites for the EBCD component. EBCD was a staged process involving gathering experiences and views of i) family members who have lost a relative to domestic homicide; ii) survivors of domestic abuse who have experienced assaults or stalking and iii) professionals involved in the DHR process.

One-to-one in-depth digital video and/or audio interviews were conducted with family members (n=7) who had been bereaved by domestic homicide and survivors of domestic violence (n=10) (in the absence of homicide victims) to further understand the background, relational aspects and the journey pre-and post-homicide. The interviews examined the experiences and resilience of survivors and asked about i) family relationships; ii) contact and experience (or lack of) with support services; iii) missed opportunities for intervention; iv) experiences of DHR involvement (where relevant).

Semi-structured, audio recorded interviews were conducted with professionals (n=19: 9 in Wales and 10 in Lancashire) who have worked with victims or been involved in DHRs, e.g. healthcare professionals, social workers, voluntary agency staff, police officers from the two identified CSP networks (Lancashire and Wales). The aim was to understand professionals’ perspectives of the opportunities and challenges presented by DHRs. They focussed on experiences of involvement in DHRs, expectations, learning that has emerged from DHRs, and barriers and facilitators to the implementation of recommendations from DHRs.

Access:

Access to family members was largely through Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse (AAFDA) and access to survivors of domestic violence was via Safe Net (Lancashire).

Analysis:

Interviews were transcribed and analysed using the Listening Guide (Brown and Gilligan, 1991) which involved four sequential readings (or ‘listenings’) to attend to the different voices in the narrative and to illustrate the journeys of victims, families, good practice and lost opportunities for intervention. Braun & Clarke’s (2006) method of thematic analysis was employed across all narratives utilising NVivo for data organisation. Key trigger points were identified through the analysis on which the film was based e.g. critical points, big moments (good and bad), moments of truth, or emotional hotspots. The subsequent 30/35 minute DVD was produced from this was co-edited and co-produced with participants. We created three digital films and these are available at: <https://domestichomicide-halt.co.uk/resource-center/>

Dissemination:

Following the analysis, and the identification of themes from interviews, a full-day event was convened with the two CSP networks to share the learning and to identify priorities for action. Outputs including policy briefings, peer reviewed journal articles, a series of films, a book of poetry based on the transcripts of survivor and family interviews were disseminated via a hybrid online and in person conference (May 2022) and on the project website (https://domestichomicide-halt.co.uk) to enhance policy and practice by improving methods for implementing the recommendations of domestic homicide reviews.

An expanding series of peer-reviewed journal articles are also available the HALT project website (<https://domestichomicide-halt.co.uk/resource-center/>) or directly via these links: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hsc.13725>

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hsc.12881>

<https://academic.oup.com/bjsw/article-abstract/49/1/59/4972703?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=true>

<https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/jgbv/aop/article-10.1332-239868021X16316184865237/article-10.1332-239868021X16316184865237.xml?rskey=1nv5U8&result=1>

The dataset:

The total archived dataset at UKRI comprises quantitative and qualitative data from WP2 and WP3. The SPSS database contains data from the 302 DHRs. The majority of DHRs cover domestic homicides from the period 2011-2017 in DHRS published from 2012, but two relate to homicides committed in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The interview transcripts interviews with family members (7), survivors of domestic violence (10) and professionals (19) who have worked with victims or been involved in DHRs. These are also available in the form of three digital films available here: <https://domestichomicide-halt.co.uk/resource-center/>

References:

Home Office (2016) Multi-agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews. Report, Home Office, UK, December.

ONS (2022) Homicide in England and Wales: year ending March 2021 – Appendix Tables (Worksheet 13 and Table 31). Accessed 24 May 2022: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/appendixtableshomicideinenglandandwales

UNODC (2018) Global Study on Homicide: Gender-related killing of women and girls. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018. Accessed 2 September 2021: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/GSH2018/GSH18\_Gender-related\_killing\_of\_women\_and\_girls.pdf