

Richard Travers,
HM Senior Coroner for Surrey

[REDACTED]

21st April 2022

Dear Mr Travers,

Regulation 28: Prevent Future Deaths Report – Aliny Godhino

We write on behalf of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) and the College of Policing (the College) in relation to paragraph 7, Schedule 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, and the prevention of future deaths reports sent to the NPCC, College of Policing (CoP) and Surrey Police, dated the 14th March 2022.

Whilst the NPCC and the College have separate and distinct responsibilities, the two organisations frequently work together on national approaches to domestic abuse and domestic homicide. As such, this response is provided jointly in respect of both organisations. The notice sets out your concerns that arose from the information received during the inquest into the death of Ms Godhino. We are very sorry to read of the circumstances of Ms Godhino's death. Our sympathies are with her family and friends and we share your commitment to addressing the issues that contributed to her untimely loss.

The notice sets out six matters of concern for Surrey Police, the NPCC and CoP. In order to establish a better understanding of the circumstances we have spoken to the domestic abuse leads within Surrey police and they will respond to matters of concern 1-5.

Concern 6

Cultural Risk: I found that there was a failure to take account of the risk arising from the fact that the perpetrator was from Brazil, where there is a considerably higher incidence of domestic homicide than in the United Kingdom. I was told that no national source of information concerning such cultural risks exists for the benefit of officers investigating domestic abuse who are required to assess and manage the risks arising. Although steps are being taken in Surrey to build knowledge of relevant cultural norms for local communities, I was told that a national data base of relevant and evidenced cultural information, whether based on statistical incidence of domestic violence or homicide, or otherwise, would assist in ensuring cultural risk is not overlooked. 6 ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN In my opinion action should be taken to prevent future death.

Response

The NPCC/CoP and individual forces have a rich understanding of different communities and each force has its own methods of community engagement.

Crime recording practices vary very significantly between countries. Reported international domestic homicide rates are often of questionable value because of the fragility of the reporting regime on which they are based. We would be very cautious before drawing assumptions that individuals are violent based on their cultural background or nationality. We would fear that this could constitute unlawful stereotyping of particular communities.

We set out below the evidence base for understanding how culture and nationality affect domestic abuse. There is no evidence that we are aware of to suggest that people from a particular national or cultural community are more or less likely to be involved in domestic abuse or commit domestic homicide.

A perpetrator's nationality and culture may play a part in understanding the circumstances of a domestic incident or homicide. Understanding relevant cultures may also assist police responders to investigate offences, as it would for a range of other characteristics, such as any disability of those involved, mental ill-health, substance abuse, etc.

Current evidence base of nationality data

- A 10-year report from the (UK) Femicide Census (2020)¹, identified that homicides of women by men occurred across 68 different nationalities (of victims) and concluded Eastern European women may face particular challenges:

¹ Femicide Census. (2020) UK Femicides 2009-2018. *Femicide Census*. [online] Available at: www.femicidecensus.org/reports.

‘There may be particular issues facing Eastern European women in the UK that merit further investigation, such as poverty, language barriers, sexual exploitation, economic and social precarity, cultural issues, dependency on men and barriers to accessing support’ (Femicide Census 2020: 50).

Statement from ██████████, research manager ██████████ – ‘Agencies need to be much more proactive in acknowledging the way in which they can themselves perpetuate further harm through racialised and intersectional myths and assumptions – e.g. racism, ableism, ageism, class within reporting, risk assessment and safeguarding approaches’ (Femicide Census 2020: 51).

- The NPCC/CoP Domestic Homicide Project started at the beginning of COVID. The first 12 month report reports on all domestic homicides between - March 2020 - March 2021.²

‘Nationality was known in 65% of cases and, where known, most cases (86%), were British. The next most frequent nationalities were Polish (4%, 6 cases), Sri Lankan (2%, 3 cases) and South American (1%, 2 cases), followed by a number of other nationalities at 1% (1 case each). The number of cases in each nationality category, except British, were too small to be able to draw any conclusions from’ (Bates et al. 2021: 41).

‘Homicide Index data shows that for 2019/20, 19% of victims were of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnicity.’³ So, whilst the majority of victims during the project period were White, the proportion of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic victims since Covid-19 appears to be higher than both the previous 15-year homicides average and the 2019/20 data (by 5 percentage points), as well as the general population (by 10 percentage points)’ (Bates et al. 2021: 39).

² ██████████ (2021) Domestic Homicides and Suspected Victim Suicides During the Covid-19 Pandemic 2020-2021. Available at: <https://www.vkpp.org.uk/publications/publications-and-reports/reports/>

³ We note the 2021 Sewell Report recommendation for a move away from the term “BAME”. This report was drafted, and data analysed prior to the publication of the Sewell Report. In this report we continue to use “BAME” to describe minoritised, non-White ethnicity groups. We acknowledge that this term can be essentialising and can also obscure minoritisation of other ethnic groups including some White groups such as Gypsy or Traveller communities. We will consider and consult our Stakeholder Group on the best appropriate ethnicity categories and alternative terminology for use in future reports arising from this project.

There are certain behaviours that run through all cases, irrespective of nationality. These include suspect's attitudes towards women, a sense of entitlement and subsequent levels of control. It is important that officers have the cultural competence to understand intersectionality, particularly how these behaviours may be exhibited or experienced differently by perpetrators and victims with different backgrounds and protected characteristics. Several academic studies have agreed on the top risk factors and these form part of the risk identification and assessment processes for police.



Data source: Bates et al. (2021: 53), Figure 18.

In order to ensure officers are equipped to identify these risks and mitigate them the CoP have provided a range of knowledge products to be applied in domestic abuse cases.

- Domestic Abuse Matters Training – uses the voice of the victim to emphasise that risk assessment has to focus on the individual needs of the victim, highlights where matters of ethnicity and culture may impact on a victim's vulnerability to harm and outlines the dynamics of coercive and controlling behaviour;
- Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) – carefully constructed to get the best information from victims to allow the best risk assessment and proven to better identify highest risk behaviour.

- Vulnerability and Risk training – encourages responders to ‘walk a mile in the shoes of the victim’ by basing discussions around developing understanding of case studies with video testimony of real people; also raises ethnicity and cultural matters as a factor to consider and provides an understanding of what motivates perpetrators. General vulnerability approach that focuses on features and attributes of the subject combined with consideration of the situation to support responders develop the best understanding of risk and the best measures to take to mitigate those risks.
- Risk Assessment Guidelines – emphasise curiosity, clues and communication.
- The College of Policing Honour Based Abuse (HBA) advice – gives an understanding of the ethnic and/or cultural matters that drive HBA and highlights patriarchy and motivation for perpetrators abuse.

We consider that the approach of NPCC and the College in emphasising the individual needs of domestic abuse victims, with a particular focus on professional curiosity, cultural competence and improving risk assessment, is the best way to support police responders. We wholeheartedly agree that the cultural background and norms of a perpetrator must be taken into consideration and our policies and guidance address this. We do not believe there is the evidence to support a nationality based risk database and to create such a product may lead to challenge regarding discrimination.

Please send any enquiries relating to this response to [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Chair,
National Police Chiefs’ Council

[REDACTED]

Chief Constable [REDACTED]
Chief Executive Officer
College of Policing