



Ms. Lorraine Harris,
HM Area Coroner for the City of Kingston upon Hull
and County of the East Riding of Yorkshire
The Guildhall
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23/8/2022

Dear Ms. Harris

Thank you for your letter of 28th June enclosing a Prevention of Future Death (PFD) report concerning the tragic death of Jessica Louise ('Jessie') Laverack on 2nd February 2018. You will have received a formal reply from Rachel Maclean MP, then Minister for Safeguarding, on behalf of the Home Secretary, confirming that Home Office officials would investigate the matters which you raised and respond before your formal deadline of 23rd August.

Tackling domestic abuse is a government priority. As you will know, the government has taken a range of measures in recent years to tackle domestic abuse more effectively, including through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This is a truly game-changing piece of legislation which will transform our response to victims in every region in England and Wales and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

The government published the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance on 8 July 2022 to support with the understanding and implementation of the definitions of 'domestic abuse' and 'personally connected' as set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The key objectives of the statutory guidance are to:

- Provide clear information on what domestic abuse is and what impact it has on victims, including children;
- Provide guidance to frontline professionals who have responsibilities for safeguarding and support victims of domestic abuse; and
- Convey some of the best practice and encourage multi-agency working, recognizing that everyone has a role to play in support victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

On 30th March, we published the cross-Government Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan. This was informed by the unprecedented 180,000 responses we received to our Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Call for Evidence, and relevant data, literature, and input from experts. The Plan invests over £230 million into tackling this heinous crime. This includes over £140 million for supporting victims, £47 million of this will be ringfenced over three years for community-based services to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and over £75 million for tackling perpetrators. We will also explore ways to actively manage the most harmful perpetrators, including through

considering the creation of a register of domestic abuse offenders. The Plan also highlighted the importance of enabling the whole system to operate with greater coordination and effectiveness, and included a commitment to invest up to £7.5 million investment into domestic abuse interventions in healthcare settings.

Your report raises twelve matters of concern which we have grouped in three themes:

Suicide linked to domestic abuse

The Government is absolutely committed to developing the evidence base and interventions to prevent suicides linked to domestic abuse. It is devastating to know that those trapped by domestic abuse can feel so hopeless that they believe the only way out is suicide. In the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan, we committed to continue to support a package of measures to tackle suicides which take place following domestic abuse.

The commitments in the Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan include measures to update police guidance on suicide so that it explicitly includes references to domestic abuse and for the police to consider whether domestic abuse was a contributing factor in cases of unexplained deaths and suspected suicides. We also committed to continue to fund the Domestic Homicide and Suspected Victim Suicides Project, led by the National Police Chiefs' Council, College of Policing (NPCC) and the National Policing Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP). The NPCC and VKPP Domestic Homicide and Suspected Victim Suicides Project alongside counting all domestic abuse related deaths which, as well as domestic murder by a (current or ex) partner, family member or co-habitee, also counts child deaths in a domestic setting, unexplained or suspicious deaths, and suspected suicides of individuals with a known history of domestic abuse victimisation. Later this year, the project will publish its second report with further analysis, recommendations and learning for agencies on risk factors and possible interventions for these complex cases.

We will also be strengthening the Domestic Homicide Review statutory guidance for suicide cases to improve clarity for cases which should be referred for a Domestic Homicide Review and how to review these complex cases.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance provides guidance to frontline professionals, who have responsibilities for safeguarding and support victims of domestic abuse, including health professionals. It sets out in detail the impact that domestic abuse can have on victims, both physical but also psychological. It also highlights that the psychological impact of domestic abuse can be so severe that it can lead to suicide ideation and attempt.

The Department for Health and Social Care will respond separately on better information sharing about the risks of sleep deprivation and its impact on mental health and suicide.

Police awareness, training and risk assessment

Whilst the use of Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment (DASH) risk assessment form and vulnerability hubs are an operational issue for policing, the Government is committed to ensuring the police are equipped to tackle domestic abuse effectively. The Home Secretary commissioned Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to help police forces to keep strengthening their responses, and to further support the action we set out in our cross-Government Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, which we published in summer 2021, and Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan. The Government has committed to ensuring all HMICFRS actions are implemented and we have taken decisive action. This will include, for example adding violence against

women and girls to the Strategic Policing Requirement, meaning that it will be set out as a national threat for forces to respond alongside other threats such as terrorism, serious and organised crime, and child sexual abuse.

In terms of training, the College of Policing has developed the Policing Education Qualifications Framework which is an important step in raising standards in policing, including in tackling violence against women and girls. Additionally, the College have developed a range of other training products, including the Domestic Abuse Matters programme. We committed up to £3.3m to support further rollout of the training.

Multi-agency working and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)

The MARAC model is designed to provide an effective multi-agency response to manage the risks to victims of domestic abuse. There is a concern that statutory duties can be a blunt tool and that making MARACs statutory risks fostering a culture of minimum compliance rather than genuine local ownership and accountability. More importantly, placing MARACs on a statutory basis also risks locking down a particular model of multi-agency working and may stifle the development of local, innovative models to manage safeguarding risks, such as those with complex needs. The Government believes the current MARAC model gives agencies flexibility in the actions they put forward to protect those at risk of harm from domestic abuse. The cases discussed at MARAC are, by their very nature, demanding and complex. We believe the MARAC process can provide an effective forum for managing those risks.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Statutory Guidance conveys what best practice in supporting victims looks like, including for multi-agency working and MARACs more specifically. The guidance sets out that MARACs should be attended by representatives from the police, Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) services, housing, children's services, the Probation Service, primary health, mental health, substance misuse service and adult social care.

The Tackling Domestic Abuse Plan also recognises that the whole of society needs to work together to reduce the prevalence of domestic abuse, domestic homicide and suicides linked to domestic abuse. The Plan emphasised that collaboration and coordination between and within organisations must be improved and referenced MARACs as a successful example of multi-agency collaboration.

The Department for Health and Social Care will respond separately on the new provisions of the Health and Care Act 2022.

Yours sincerely


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Interpersonal Abuse Unit