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Councillor Angela Douglas
Chair of Gateshead Community Safety Partnership
Gateshead Council
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6 February 2019

Dear Councillor Douglas,

Domestic Homicide Review – Alice RUGGLES

Thank you for submitting the Domestic Homicide Review report and associated documents in respect of Alice Ruggles to the Home Office Quality Assurance (QA) Panel. The documents were considered at the Panel meeting on 23 January 2019.

The QA Panel would like to thank you for conducting this review and for providing them with the final report. The Panel found this to be a thorough, sensitively written report which is robust, challenging and well researched. The report contains a comprehensive package of recommendations and the Panel was pleased to note that a conference is being planned to share the findings from the review.

The Panel acknowledged the detail in the report and noted this was the strong view expressed by Alice's family. The Panel welcomed the engagement of Alice's family throughout the review process with advocacy support. The Panel was particularly pleased to note that Alice's family are content with the final document.

The Panel was grateful to the chair, Stuart Douglass, for attending the meeting and providing additional insight into some of the challenges that emerged in conducting this review. The Panel also appreciated the clarity provided by Mr Douglass in relation to the sensitivities around the involvement of the perpetrator and his family in the review.

As mentioned at the meeting, the Panel made the following observations:

- There are references in the report to intimate photographs of the victim being used by the perpetrator to coerce and control and the Panel felt it may be helpful to explain that such behaviour could constitute a criminal offence and set out the sentences available for these types of offences under the appropriate legislation;

- You may wish to review paragraph 111 as it confirms that Alice's employer was not part of the Workplace Domestic Abuse Strategy and Workplace Champions Scheme introduced by the Police and Crime Commissioner, but the onus appears to be placed on the PCC to further publicise these initiatives without probing why the telecommunication's company was not part of these schemes;
- Given the detail in the overview report, the Panel welcomed the production of an executive summary which they noted was in the process of being drafted;
- The Panel noted the request by Alice's family to use her real name in the report and the factors that have been taken into account by the DHR panel and Community Safety Partnership as outlined in paragraph 3.2. The statutory guidance sets out that DHR reports should be anonymised in order to protect the identity of the victim and others. However, it is clear that Alice's family are fully aware of the implications of using Alice's name in the report and ultimately this is a decision for the Community Safety Partnership in consultation with the family.

The Panel does not need to see another version of the report, but I would be grateful if you could email us at DHREnquiries@homeoffice.gov.uk and provide us with the URL to the report when it is published.

The QA Panel felt it would be helpful to routinely sight Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) on DHRs in their local area. I am, accordingly, copying this letter to your PCC for information.

I am also copying this letter to Stuart Douglass for information.

Yours sincerely

Helen Cordy
Chair of the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel

My Ref:

Your Ref:

Date: 14 March 2019

Response to Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel Letter in respect of the Domestic Homicide Review into Alice RUGGLES

Gateshead Community Safety Board has recently concluded a statutory Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) in respect of Alice Ruggles who was tragically murdered by her ex-partner in October 2016.

I wish to express sincere condolences, on behalf of Gateshead Community Safety Board, to Alice's family, friends and work colleagues for their sad loss – and I hope that the learning from this review will go on to help agencies better detect and address stalking behaviour and to prevent similar incidents from happening again in the future.

I would like to thank Alice's family for their involvement throughout the review and for their continued efforts and positive work to raise the profile of Alice's experience.

Gateshead Community Safety Board received an approval letter from the Home Office DHR Quality Assurance Panel in February 2019 confirming that we were able to formally publish the Overview Report. As Chair of the Community Safety Board, I am satisfied with contents of the letter and I am pleased the Home Office found it to be a "thorough, sensitively written report which is robust, challenging and well researched".

Within the letter, there were a small number of observations identified and, although we are not required to do so, we felt obliged to provide a short response to each of these comments:

Home Office Observation 1

- There are references in the report to intimate photographs of the victim being used by the perpetrator to coerce and control and the Panel felt it may be helpful to explain that such behaviour could constitute a criminal offence and set out the sentences available for these types of offences under the appropriate legislation;

Our Response

- We recognise that it was a potential missed opportunity not to explain this further within the report. We do not intend to amend the Final Overview Report but acknowledge that it may have been useful to the reader had it been included.

Home Office Observation 2

- You may wish to review paragraph 111 as it confirms that Alice's employer was not part of the Workplace Domestic Abuse Strategy and Workplace Champions Scheme introduced by the Police and Crime Commissioner, but the onus appears to be placed on the PCC to further publicise these initiatives without probing why the telecommunications company was not part of these schemes;

Our Response

- We have liaised with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria and have agreed to amend Paragraph 111. The Overview Report should now be read with the following addendum:

111 In Alice's case, the perpetrator continued to phone, text, message and even turned up unannounced at work-related events. Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, Dame Vera Baird, has successfully introduced a Workplace Domestic Abuse Strategy and Workplace Champions Scheme designed to be able to support victims both practically and emotionally. This project has been well advertised and has been proactively rolled out across many private employers and public-sector organisations in Northumbria – and is regarded as best practice. Alice's employer, despite its size and standing in Newcastle, was not part of this positive initiative. The Panel concluded the Workplace Champions network across Northumbria should continue to be actively promoted to encourage further involvement in the voluntary scheme from non-participating organisations. It would also be prudent to embed Alice's story in future Workplace Champions training sessions to ensure stalking is better recognised and understood; thus, increasing the likelihood of employees / victims being offered appropriate stalking advice, support and guidance whilst at work.

- In addition, we intend to include an additional action as part of Recommendation 16 for the Chair of Gateshead Community Safety Board to write to Alice's employers to try and encourage their involvement in the Northumbria Domestic Abuse Workplace Champions Scheme.

Home Office Observation 3

- Given the detail in the overview report, the Panel welcomed the production of an executive summary which they noted was in the process of being drafted;

Our Response

- A shorter Executive Summary document will be made available – however, following discussions with Alice's family, the DHR Panel have agreed to publish the full unredacted version of the report in the first instance (as part of the publication stage) and a shorter version will be made available (via the Community Safety Board website) at a later date.

Home Office Observation 4

- The Panel noted the request by Alice's family to use her real name in the report and the factors that have been taken into account by the DHR panel and Community Safety Partnership as outlined in paragraph 3.2. The statutory guidance sets out that DHR reports should be anonymised in order to protect the identity of the victim and others. However, it is clear that Alice's family are fully aware of the implications of using Alice's name in the report and ultimately this is a decision for the Community Safety Partnership in consultation with the family.

Our Response

- At an extraordinary Community Safety Board held in December 2018, all of our partners unanimously agreed to grant the wishes of Alice's family and publish an unredacted version of the report, and to name Alice throughout. We felt there were some significant mitigating circumstances relating to this case and our rationale for agreeing to this decision is set out within the Confidentiality section in the Final Overview Report.

This has been a high-profile review that has resulted in lot of national and regional media attention. It is often difficult to carry out a review under this intense spotlight and I would like to express how satisfied I am with the work undertaken by the DHR Panel, Independent Chair and Author to bring this case to a conclusion. I am passionate about tackling domestic abuse and, having read the Final Overview Report, I was shocked by Alice's experiences.

Following Alice's death, there is emerging evidence of positive change at a local level, where we have seen a marked increase in the volume of recorded stalking offences, and nationally, significant action at Parliamentary level. I am confident that, together with our partner agencies and alongside Alice's family, we can use the findings from this review to further improve our collective response to victims of domestic abuse and stalking.

We know anyone can be stalked and we collectively need to be better equipped and confident to recognise the signs to help put a stop to this distressing crime. Together we must take the threat and harm posed by stalking seriously at a leadership, frontline and community level to help bring stalking to an end.

If you have any queries, or would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact: Adam Lindridge, Community Safety Manager for Gateshead Community Safety Partnership on 0191 433 3243 or adamlindridge@gateshead.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Angela Douglas
Chair – Gateshead Community Safety Partnership

