

Ceredigion Community Safety Partnership (CSP) response statement to the final Home Office Quality Assurance Panel Feedback letter, dated September 2023, pertaining the Domestic Homicide Review Report (Betty)

This response statement will be published on the Ceredigion County Council website alongside the final Home Office Quality Assurance Panel Feedback letter.

1. **Panel Feedback:** Paragraph 12.7: 'There was also an identified need to emphasise that domestic abuse is not gender specific...'. No amendments have been made to clarify the fact that domestic abuse is a gendered crime. Whilst domestic abuse does affect all, it should read in line with information based on statistics. The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 5.0% of adults aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022; this equates to an estimated 2.4 million adults (1.7 million women and 699,000 men).

CSP Response: The CSP don't believe that the sentence quoted above reads as though the Chair is dismissing that domestic abuse is a 'gendered crime', in fact, he and the panel don't think that at all. It's also important to note that is a different concept to 'gender specific'.

2. **Panel Feedback:** The review was asked to add more information on the police force the Chair was employed by and the date of retirement, and this now states 'He retired from an English police service in 2005', which is not the level of detail asked for.

CSP Response: As the report outlines, the Chair was assessed by the CSP to have the necessary independence, experience, and skills to undertake the role of Panel Chair, however the final report has been revised to include additional details as noted by your point above. The CSP don't believe that further additions need to be made to the final report in this regard.

3. **Panel Feedback:** There is very little rationale provided for the delay in commencing the DHR process and why it has taken 3 years and 5 months to be submitted to the Home Office.

CSP Response: The report states the timescales involved with this review. The initial meeting of the DHR Panel was delayed until January 2020 due to the judicial process that was taking place following Betty's death. As outlined within the report, the main delays were due to Covid-19, however regular correspondence and communication were maintained with the Domestic Abuse Policy Team at the Home Office to inform of progress and revised timelines. The final reports were submitted to the Home Office on the 26th of November 2021 therefore we can't comment on the delays that occurred following this date.

4. **Panel Feedback:** The comment following paragraph 1.10 suggests that the "Review Panel are keen to stress they are not suggesting that Betty was to blame" yet Para 1.10 contradicts this. Paragraph 1.10 states, "it is the view of the DHR panel that a breakdown in Betty's mental wellbeing was the main cause of arguments and friction between the couple". This can be perceived as victim blaming and should be addressed.

CSP Response: The report appropriately notes the factors that caused the arguments but is careful not to apportion blame to the victim. Having considered the panel's feedback very carefully, we see no alternative way of communicating this, acknowledging that the statements may appear to be contradictory. However, due to the care taken in repeatedly stating that Betty was not to blame, we do not agree that the report could be perceived as victim blaming.

- Panel Feedback:** Betty's voice appears lost within the report, which appears very perpetrator centric. Whilst the QA panel can appreciate this was a DHR, it is evident that there has been some lost learning opportunities due to the absence of any professional with specialised knowledge of Alzheimer's. The post-mortem identifies evidence of Alzheimer's, and it is accepted that Betty had not been clinically diagnosed before her death, but it is clearly a factor, which does not appear to have been explored in-depth. It is acknowledged that the report references the Alzheimer's Society, however exploring the life limiting illness of Alzheimer's and the likely stages of dementia, cross referenced with Betty's increasing isolation, loss of interest in talking to people and repeated episodes of aggression, could have better reflected Betty's deteriorating health. It may have also provided strong mitigation for some of Betty's behaviour and helped the reader understand the difficulties Betty would have been experiencing with her declining mental health.

CSP Response: The feedback regarding specialised knowledge of Alzheimer's is noted. The remainder of the feedback above relates to what is already included in the report and was explored in depth.

- Panel Feedback:** Paragraph 12.16 – It is not a sufficient reference to link to Dewis Choice's research projects page when citing specific findings, and there are areas where references are needed but are not provided for example 9.7 (particularly the claim that men may be 'more' reluctant to report abuse), 9.11, 9.22, 9.25.

CSP Response: All references and citations have been checked to make sure that they are accurate, consistent, and complete. In regard to the other suggestions detailed above, we consider them not to be proportionate. The report is written in a style consistent with accepted protocols and we are content with it.

- Panel Feedback:** Please include any plans for learning events, inclusion of learning into training etc.

CSP Response: The agency-specific recommendations, that include learning and training etc, can be found at the end of the report. The timescale within which they are to be achieved and who will be responsible for their implementation are detailed within the action plan that accompanies the report.