

LIFE OR DEATH?

**Preventing Domestic Homicides
and Suicides of Black and
Minoritised Women**

Executive Summary

November 2023



imkaan

Funded by the Baring Foundation

Introduction

This report was created through a partnership project between Imkaan and the Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ)¹. Imkaan is the national umbrella women's organisation dedicated to addressing violence against Black and minoritised women and girls, with 37 member organisations across the UK. CWJ is a lawyer-led charity focused on challenging failings and discrimination against women in the criminal justice system.

The research examines the obstacles faced by Black and minoritised women who lose their lives in domestic homicide and suicide in the context of domestic abuse, focusing on the issues they face over and above, and in addition to, the obstacles faced by white women. Frontline workers at Imkaan member organisations identified the themes that the women they support routinely face, and these are illustrated by case studies based on post-death investigations, including Domestic Homicide Reviews, investigations by the Independent Office of Police Conduct, and inquests. The women's narratives demonstrate vividly how the themes played out in their lives, and deaths.

We identified 44 Black and minoritised women whose deaths came within the remit of the research² and collected data on the extent to which those women disclosed abuse and if so to which services, the extent to which they had support and if so from which services, and whether there was input in their Domestic Homicide Review from an expert with specialist understanding of their background.

We examine the many different ways in which Black and minoritised women can face barriers and state failings when seeking protection from domestic abuse. We then consider the implications for support services run by and for Black and minoritised women, and what more is needed during post-death investigations.

This research uses a feminist intersectional analysis, recognising gendered and racialised norms as the social fabric in which the women lived and that contributed to their deaths. It brings the experiences of Black and minoritised women into the conversation about institutionalised racism. It also examines failings within a human rights and equalities framework and identifies a range of breaches of the Equality Act and of a range of international obligations that the UK has signed up to addressing violence against women and girls.



Black and minoritised women are not getting the support and protections they need: this can be a matter of life or death

1 see [Annex 1](#) for details of these organisations and other participants in the research

2 see [Annex 2](#) for our methodology

Definitions

Black and minoritised women

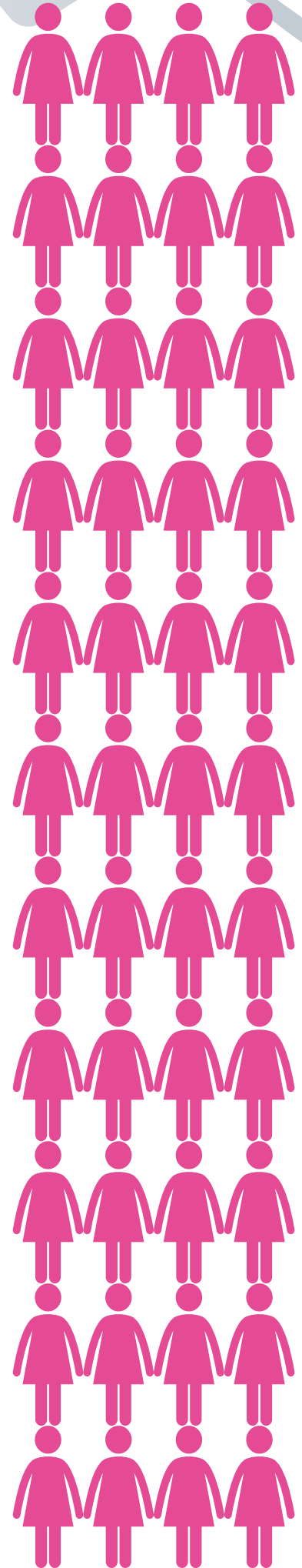
We adopt the Imkaan definition of women whose herstories originate from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America.

'By and for' organisations

We use as shorthand the term 'by and for' organisations or services to refer to frontline women's support services set up and led and run by and for Black and minoritised women, but we recognise that there are many other kinds of 'by and for' services such as those supporting disabled women, LGBT+ and others.

Culture

The terms 'culture' and/or 'cultural' are used throughout this report. We adopt Imkaan's understanding and framing of 'culture' in the context of VAWG. It is important to recognise that culture is not static but a fluid and dynamic phenomenon. Culture is often too narrowly defined by agencies to only consider ethnicity rather than the multiple cultures we inhabit in society (interpersonal, family, wider community, societal). Cultural contexts also differ based on many factors e.g., intergenerational differences. This thinking leads to manifestations of VAWG within Black and minoritised communities being treated as cultural phenomena rather than symptoms of patriarchy and gender inequality (as with all other forms of gender-based violence).



Chapter 1

Barriers to reporting and state failings

Barriers to reporting and failings by state agencies are intertwined. Many Black and minoritised women do not report abuse, however when women overcome significant barriers and do report, they can encounter failings by agencies which deter or prevent them from reporting again. A feedback loop can result where women are reluctant to report because they fear they will not be taken seriously, or even disbelieved, and if they do then report and encounter this response they withdraw from the process. If there is little understanding by police and other professionals of the barriers that women have had to overcome, and continue to face, when reporting abuse, then the quality of the response is likely to be inadequate and attrition rates higher.

Section A – barriers to reporting to state agencies and professionals

Isolation and no access to support

Some survivors are unable or lack the opportunity to disclose abuse because they are so isolated, often within a pattern of coercive control. They are accompanied to medical and other appointments by their husband or in-laws and are not aware of the existence of support services in their communities.

♀ **Nadira (Newham)**



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Pressure from family and community

Some Black and minoritised women face pressure from family and community not to report abuse, as this brings shame on the woman herself, on the perpetrator and on the extended family. They also face acute cultural pressure to remain within a marriage whatever the cost.

♀ [Idil \(Bristol\)](#)

♀ [Fatou \(Norfolk\)](#)

Fear of police and lack of trust in the police

Many Black and minoritised communities in the UK experience high levels of police racism and over-policing, excessive and disproportionate stop and search, and immigration enforcement and criminalisation. Understandably women live with a deep distrust and fear of the police, partly based on the experience of men and boys in their lives, as well as the wider dislocation of their communities.

♀ [Chantelle](#)

Fear of losing children

Many Black and minoritised women are terrified of having their children taken away by social services, and prefer to stay in abusive relationships rather than take this risk. Language and other communication barriers in their dealings with social workers and professionals, lack of understanding of cultural context and fear of being unfairly judged and discriminated against all play a part.

♀ [Raneem Oudeh - fear of social services](#)

Fear of information being shared with immigration enforcement




Many women with insecure immigration status fear that reporting to the police will lead to data sharing with immigration enforcement and the consequent risk of detention and deportation. This leaves women trapped and creates impunity for abusers.

♀ [G \(Sheffield\)](#)



Data on reporting

Within our sample of 38 homicides:

-  **11** (29%) of the women had not disclosed abuse to any professionals
-  **20** (52%) of the women reported to the police, of whom two thirds also disclosed to other agencies
-  **7** (18%) disclosed to various professionals but not to the police

We believe that police reporting rates in our sample may be higher than average because the cohort of women who were killed faced particularly high levels of risk and fear for their safety, and so were more likely than average to report to the police. These women lost their lives despite this high level of reporting.

Statistics on levels of police reporting by Black and minoritised women³

Looking at reporting levels of all Black and minoritised women, rather than those who were killed, there is limited data indicating that Black and minoritised women report significantly less frequently than the general population of survivors.

Forces are required to record the ethnicity of those reporting offences as part of their Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act in order to have due regard to equality of access to their services.⁴ However, there is a lack of research on this issue, and evidence that ethnicity data is not being recorded in a significant proportion of domestic abuse cases within some police forces.

³ See pages 23 in the full report for the research relied on in this section

⁴ See Annex 8 for a detailed legal analysis



Section B – Failings of state agencies and other professionals

Accepting the perpetrator's narrative when he has better English

Perpetrators can often communicate better in English than survivors, and can persuade agencies to accept their version of events, feeding into a culture of disbelief and victim-blaming among professionals.

♀ [Aliny Godinho](#)

Disbelieving women's accounts of abuse

Black and minoritised women face not only a lack of understanding of their situations, and the risks they face, but in some cases they face total disbelief from police officers and the assumption that they are making false allegations.

♀ [N](#)

Lack of cultural competence

A lack of cultural competence can mean that a woman's situation is not adequately understood by professionals.

♀ [Sana Shah \(Wolverhampton\)](#)

Racial stereotypes and racialised tropes

A well-known trope applied to women of African heritage is the "strong Black woman" who is capable, can look after herself and is therefore not vulnerable or in need of support and protection.

♀ [Charlotte \(Hillingdon\)](#)



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Another trope sometimes applied to women of African heritage is the “angry Black woman” who is difficult to deal with. This can lead to a lack of engagement by professionals, rather than seeking to understand and empathise with the difficult circumstances, even desperation, that is making her angry.

♀ Dawn (Leeds)

For Asian women there is sometimes an expectation that they will be passive, meek and helpless. If a woman is assertive, she may not fit the notion of the ‘perfect victim’ and the risks she faces may not be appreciated or taken seriously.

♀ Mrs Mohammedi (Bolton)

No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)

The NRPF rule means that women who have insecure immigration status and leave abusive relationships sometimes face a stark choice between destitution and returning to the abuser. As they cannot claim social security benefits, many cannot support themselves or access safe accommodation, including most women’s refuges. The lack of adequate support for all women breaches the UK’s obligations under the Istanbul Convention.⁵

♀ Nargiza (Bexley)

Identifying ‘honour-based’ abuse and recognising the risks it poses

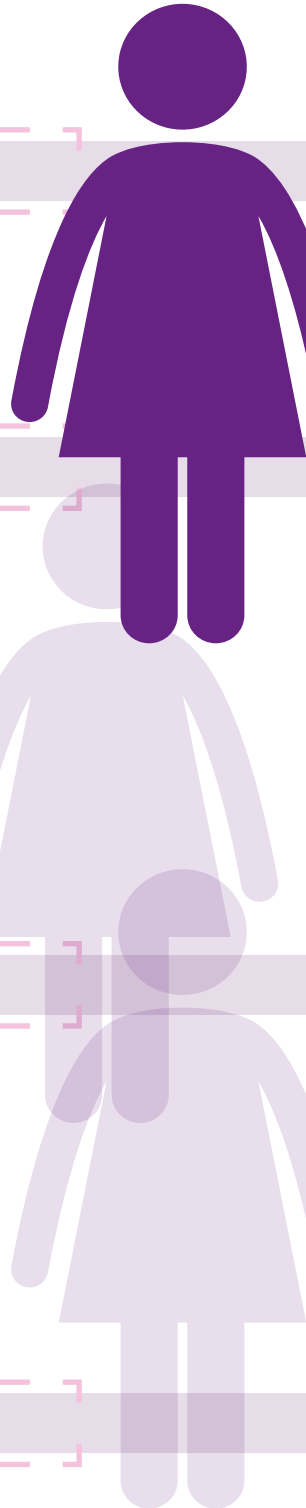
A long-term concern is that state agencies, especially the police, need to identify potential ‘honour-based’ abuse (HBA) when they come across indicators, and to recognise the severely heightened risks that it poses.⁶

♀ Charlotte (Hillingdon) – HBA case study

♀ Raneem Oudeh – HBA case study

⁵ See Annex 8 for detailed legal analysis.

⁶ A more detailed discussion on honour based abuse is included in Annex 6



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Survivors of abuse criminalised as a result of counter-allegations

For some Black and minoritised women language barriers, professionals not understanding cultural contexts, and the acceptance of a perpetrator's narrative, all feed into credibility assessments when there are counter-allegations.

♀ Rukshana (Ealing)

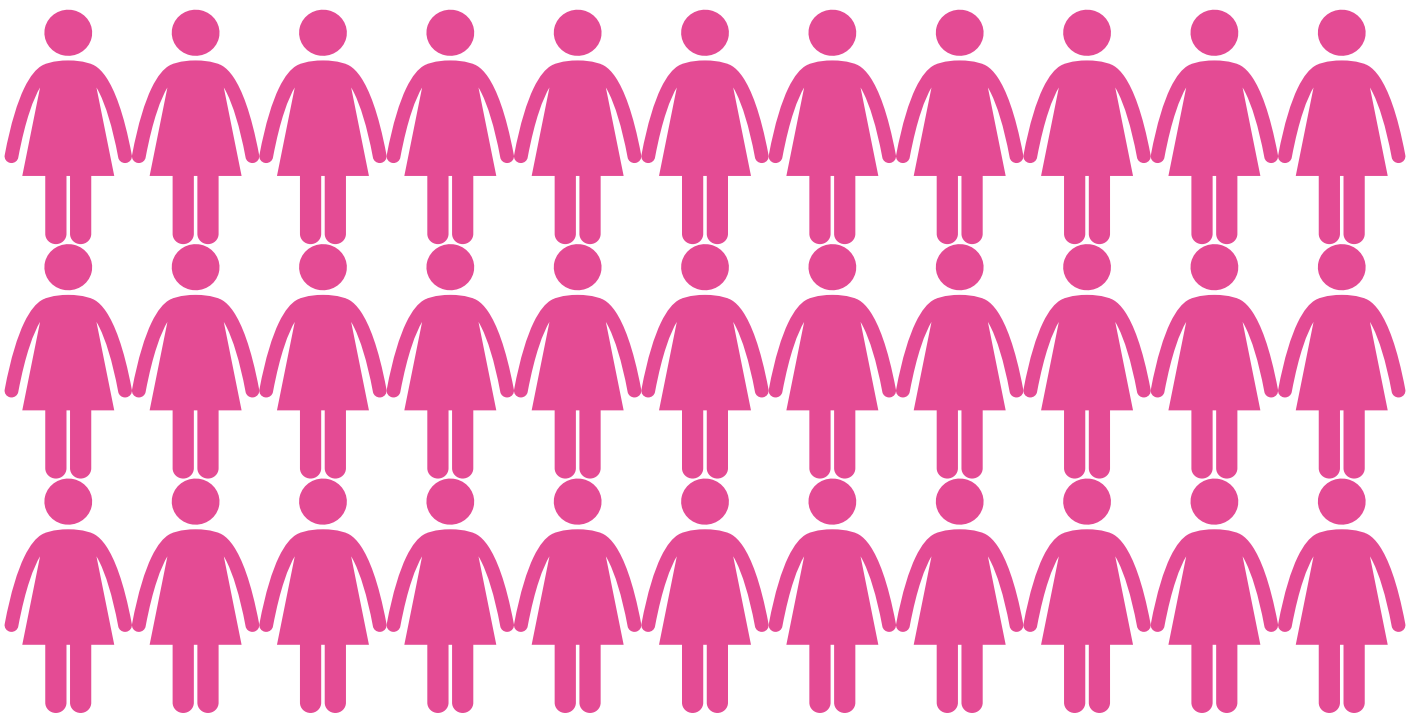
Failures by GPs and other health professionals

GPs, mental health services and other health practitioners in contact with survivors can fail to identify domestic abuse or engage with the wider context of women's lives and make interventions, such as referrals to domestic abuse services.

♀ Nadira Pritham

♀ Sana Shah

♀ Dawn (Leeds)



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Use of interpreters

The availability and use of good quality interpreting services can be critical to women's access to safety and protection. The current position on police use of interpreters breaches both the Equality Act, as indirect discrimination, and the UK's commitments under the Istanbul Convention.⁷

♀ **Failure to use professional interpreters: L (Birmingham)**

There is no recognition at a national level that the police are under an obligation to provide interpreting services, rather than doing so voluntarily. The Victim's Code includes, at Right 1.3, the right to use an interpreter but not the right to require the police to arrange an interpreter. Therefore, it can be fulfilled by the survivor arranging her own interpreter, or a non-professional person interpreting.

- ♀ Use of family members, especially children, and also friends and neighbours, is wholly inappropriate in domestic abuse and sexual violence cases.
- ♀ The use of male interpreters for reports of intimate partner abuse prevents many women from disclosing domestic and sexual abuse.
- ♀ Poor quality interpreting can have a devastating impact, particularly as intimate partner abuse cases often turn on credibility and inconsistencies are treated as undermining.
- ♀ Providing interpreting services is not part of the role of support workers at women's services
- ♀ Delays due to obtaining interpreters can have a critical impact on women's ability to support the criminal justice process
- ♀ Evidence in other languages needs to be translated and deployed

7 See Annex 8 for detailed legal analysis



Chapter 2

The need for ‘by and for’ Black and minoritised women’s services

Many of the women’s narratives show clearly how the women who died needed access to ‘by and for’ services for Black and minoritised women.

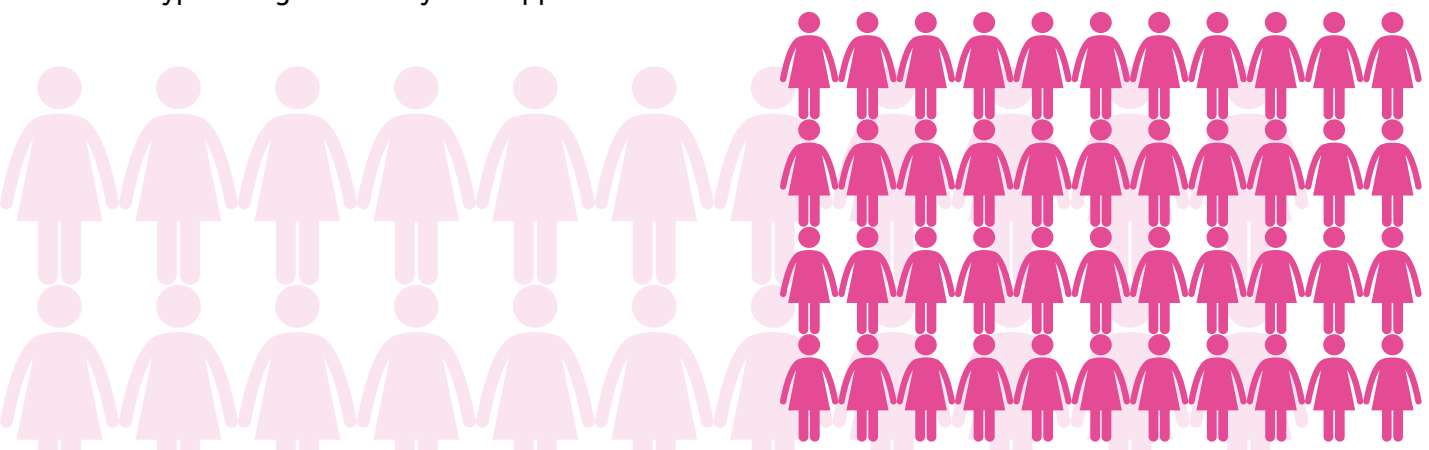
♀ Nargiza

♀ Sana Shah

♀ Manpreet (Lincolnshire)

♀ Aliny Godinho

We analysed how many women in our dataset accessed support services and the types of agencies they had support from.⁸



⁸ By ‘mainstream’ service we mean a domestic abuse support service that supports survivors from all ethnic backgrounds and is not specifically for Black and minoritised women.

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44 women, 38 died by homicide and 6 by suicide:⁹

♀ No support agency	30 (68%)
♀ Of which:	
♀ Did not disclose abuse to any agencies	11 (25%)
♀ Did disclose abuse to agencies	19 (43%)
♀ – of which declined support from mainstream DA services	6 (14%)
♀ Support from a mainstream domestic abuse service (or in one case a sexual exploitation service)	8 (18%)
♀ Support from 'by and for' service	2 (4.5%)
♀ Other	3 (7%)
♀ Support from housing and benefits service abuse not disclosed	1
♀ Support from refugee service, abuse not disclosed	1
♀ Insufficient information available	1

Overall, our data shows that almost all the women who died were not receiving support from a 'by and for' service,¹⁰ even though 71% did disclose abuse to agencies.¹¹ Clearly women are not being referred or able to access a 'by and for' service. A properly resourced 'by and for' sector can be a life or death issue.

Engagement with Black and minoritised survivors

It can be much more difficult for some Black and minoritised women to engage with domestic abuse services than for white British women. One example of this is the 'three strikes rule' that some mainstream services employ: if there is no contact after three calls the case is closed. In contrast 'by and for' services are aware of the restrictions that some women are under, where they can't take calls and won't answer unknown numbers, and take more proactive steps to engage, such as arranging meetings via schools and in places women can access safely.

♀ **Simran (Kent)**

⁹ This table includes suicides whereas the data at [page 6](#) above includes only homicides

¹⁰ The two women who did make contact with a 'by and for' service were not receiving long-term support from the service, [see page 58 of full report](#)

¹¹ See table at [page 6](#) above.

Risk assessments by 'by and for' services

'By and for' services describe how the standard risk assessment tool, the DASH¹² is not adequate for women they support, and they supplement it with additional questions that help identify the true risks that women face.

The approach of 'by and for' services begins with a deep understanding of the barriers faced by the women they support, and focuses on building relationships with the women. They adopt a probing approach with follow-up questions, analysing her situation in full, rather than a tick-box approach adopted by some police officers. Importantly, this is done in a trauma-informed way so as not to inflict further harm. It is done with empathy, through observing and understanding body language, explaining confidentiality in a way that Black and minoritised women feel safe in disclosing abuse, and maintaining relationships with the women over time.

The College of Policing has developed a new risk assessment tool for first responders, known as the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA).¹³ Black and minoritised women's organisations¹⁴ are concerned that the question intended to identify 'honour-based' abuse is no longer included in the DARA.¹⁵

The broader picture for the 'by and for' sector in the UK

We have discussed the value and need for specialist 'by and for' services, but the stark reality in the UK is that many women cannot obtain support from the 'by and for' sector because it is so severely under-funded, with the number of women who can access services extremely limited and there are some areas of the country that lack any form of specialist provision. The picture has steadily worsened over the years with large numbers of 'by and for' services losing their funding. Since 2007, over 50%¹⁶ of refuges developed for Black and minoritised women have been decommissioned, forced to close or been taken over by generic/non-specialist providers.¹⁷ The failure to fund a sustainable 'by and for' sector breaches the UK's obligations under the Istanbul Convention. The Convention requires states to allocate appropriate financial resources, including to NGOs, for specialist support services that protect all victims and are accessible to all victims, including "hard to reach groups".¹⁸

12 See the DASH checklist here: <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Dash%20risk%20checklist%20quick%20start%20guidance%20FINAL.pdf>

13 College of Policing Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) September 2022: <https://library.college.police.uk/docs/college-of-policing/Domestic-Abuse-Risk-Assessment-2022.pdf>

14 With thanks to Jasmine Mohammed from Safety4Sisters for input.

15 College of Policing Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) September 2022: <https://library.college.police.uk/docs/college-of-policing/Domestic-Abuse-Risk-Assessment-2022.pdf>

16 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/women-refuge-domestic-violence-refuge-bame-london-black-women-s-project-newham-cuts-a8990391.html>

17 See Annex 7 for a history of the Black and minoritised women's services sector and the economic realities that have caused its decline.

18 See Annex 8 for fuller legal analysis.



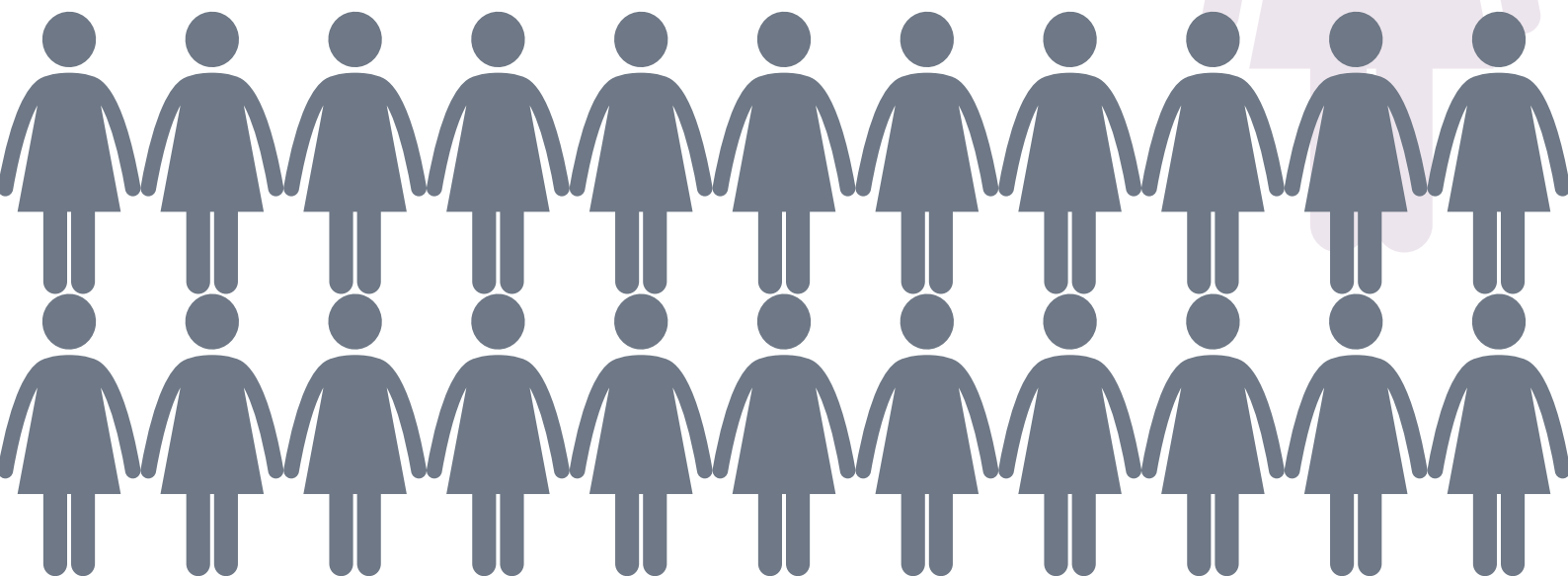
Chapter 3

The post-death investigations processes

We focus on two aspects of the investigation process, firstly improving the quality of DHRs through the proper use of so-called 'cultural experts' and secondly extending the use of inquests in appropriate cases.

Numbers in our dataset on use of 'cultural experts' by DHR panels

A 'cultural expert' is brought in to provide insight into the cultural background of the deceased, but in addition they can often bring a wider perspective on the issues arising, seeing the bigger picture through the eyes of the victim. We analysed 37 DHRs in our sample to identify whether 'cultural experts' were involved, and if so what kind.¹⁹



19 In 3 cases we only had the IPCC/IOPC report not the DHR, and in 4 cases there was insufficient information published on the composition of the DHR panel

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♀ Panel included a 'by and for' organisation (in many cases there was also a mainstream domestic abuse organisation on the panel, often due to their involvement with the deceased)	13 (35%)
♀ Panel included a mainstream domestic abuse organisation represented by a staff member from a Black and minoritised background, but no 'by and for' service	3 (8%)
♀ Panel included a mainstream domestic abuse organisation only	8 (22%)
♀ Panel included a mainstream victim support service which is not a domestic abuse specialist	3 (8%)
♀ Panel did not include any independent domestic abuse organisation either mainstream or 'by and for'20	2 (5%)
♀ Unclear: panel included members with "detailed knowledge of domestic abuse and persons with specialist knowledge relevant to the case"	1
♀ Panel had expert input from a 'cultural expert' who did not have any domestic abuse background	7 (19%)

It is very concerning that in a majority of cases there was no input from a 'by and for' organisation on the panel, and that some 'cultural experts' had no background expertise in domestic abuse. There was enormous variability in whether and from who input was obtained by chairs and panels in relation to the fact that the deceased was a Black or minoritised woman. There is clearly a need for some standardisation of approach on this. The Home Office department dealing with DHRs does not monitor whether 'cultural experts' contribute to panels, or who is brought in for the role, leaving this entirely to local DHR processes.²¹ It also does not appear to have any guidance on this.

The importance of input from 'by and for' organisations in DHRs

Members of 'by and for' organisations who have inputted as experts to DHR panels describe how they view their role as supporting the chair, being a voice of the victim from a cultural perspective, highlighting areas that need to be considered, and identifying issues that have been overlooked. Importantly, they will often be the only one on the panel not representing an organisation that had contact with the deceased, and may be the only one on the panel, apart from the chair,

20 One had input from a mainstream domestic abuse service as an 'expert' but they were not a panel member

21 As stated in response to a Freedom of Information request by CWJ February 2023



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trying to take a holistic and critical look at the bigger picture. We have heard how some experience defensiveness from statutory bodies on the panel and feel like a lone voice. One was removed from a panel after challenging other members. It can be a challenging role and staff at 'by and for' organisations are usually not paid to do it, and say that they have to do a huge amount of preparation work in the evenings in their own time. Most 'by and for' organisations do not have the capacity to absorb such work and payment should be considered when seeking detailed input from small under-funded services.

Comparison of DHRs and IOPC investigations with inquests

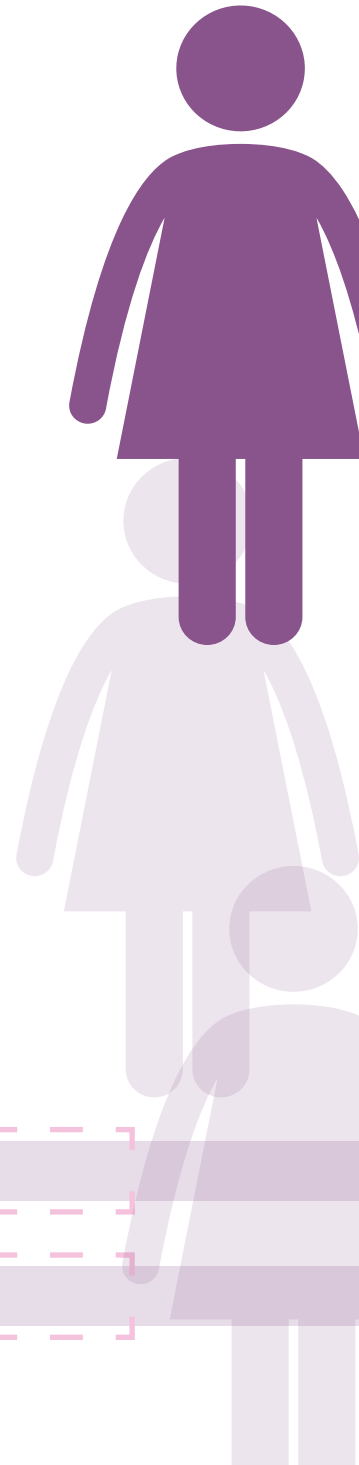
Several of the cases in our sample raised concerns about state failings which may have contributed to the death, meeting the legal threshold for holding an inquest under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), but inquests only took place in two cases in our sample.

By their nature, the DHR process and the IOPC investigation process are limited. DHRs rely almost entirely on IMR²² reports, which are prepared by the statutory agencies involved with the deceased, about their own actions. Whilst many DHR authors are highly alert to failings, they only have available to them what the agencies involved have shared, they do not have access to the primary materials on which an IMR is based and are unable to speak directly to the professionals involved in the relevant events, so the DHR model has an element of 'marking your own homework'. IOPC investigations do access primary materials and conduct interviews with relevant officers, and the focus is on potential misconduct. However the quality of investigations is variable and we have seen that the relevance of race / ethnicity can be entirely ignored.

Inquests, in contrast to DHRs and IOPC investigations, can be a more open investigation process where bereaved families can have a voice via lawyers representing their interests. At an inquest, all the witnesses attend in open court and can be questioned by the Coroner and a barrister representing the family, unlike the other procedures which take place behind closed doors. Full disclosure of documents is also provided to the family's lawyers. There is the opportunity to delve into the key issues to explore things that could otherwise be glossed over and for the family to raise the matters of concern to them. The contrast between the different processes is illustrated by the cases in our sample where inquests took place.

♀ **Aliny Godinho – comparison of DHR and inquest**

♀ **Raneem Oudeh – comparison of IPCC investigation and inquest**



Chapter 4

Women's suicides in the context of domestic abuse

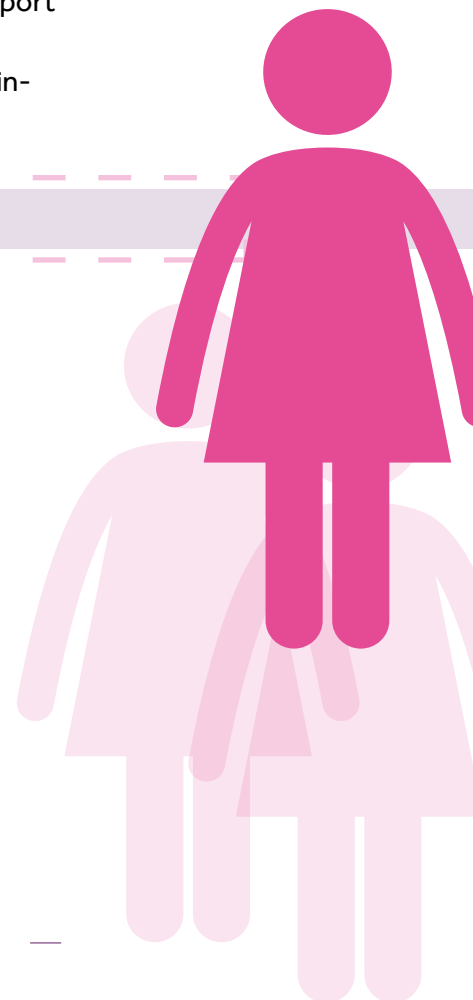
In many cases there is a clear link between a woman suffering intimate partner abuse and her suicide. The barriers and agency failings that contribute to domestic homicides of Black and minoritised women are also factors in suicides of women living with domestic abuse. Themes discussed in Chapter 1 result in the entrapment of women, some of whom can see no way out but to take their own lives. Suicidal ideation and suicide attempts were also common amongst the women who were eventually killed and across all the post-death investigation reports we see women struggling with mental ill-health. Pritam's heart-breaking story shows vividly how she was trapped beyond hope for many years. Possibly the only source of support that could have helped her was a 'by and for' domestic abuse service that understood her situation as a South Asian woman accorded low status in her in-laws' household.

♀ **Pritam (South Gloucestershire)**

The need for research on domestic abuse suicides of Black and minoritised women

From the mid-1990s and during the early 2000s, a range of studies raised concerns about the disproportionately high rates of suicidality and suicide amongst South Asian women. Anecdotally many South Asian women face the same situations of entrapment today.²³ Yet there is no up-to-date research and subsequently little change in policy and practice. There is also no national data on suicide and ethnicity because the national recording of suicides is based on Coroners' findings and the Coronial system does not require Coroners to record the ethnicity of the deceased as part of the Record of Inquest.

23 Vividly described in the full report at pages 81



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Post-death investigations following suicides of Black and minoritised women

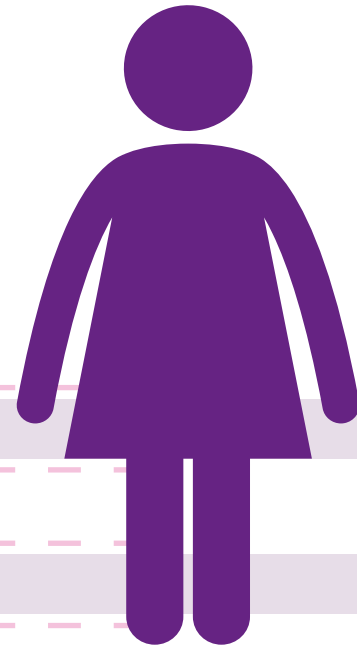
A lack of post-death investigations suggest that these deaths remain unexamined and invisible. We were only able to locate six DHRs relating to suicides of Black and minoritised women. We know that often suicide DHRs only take place when families actively push for them, and we speculate that many Black and minoritised families do not engage with this process, whether due to lack of support or the stigma of suicide and domestic abuse within their communities. The lack of clear procedures and referral pathways for DHRs in suicide cases also plays a part.



Chapter 5

Abused women who kill their abuser

Research carried out by CWJ,²⁴ shows that women who kill a male partner are usually the victim of his past abuse and the offence is usually a response to his violence, rather than the killing being a cumulative fatal outcome to the killer's own escalating violence and control. Thus, in a high proportion of cases where a woman kills a male partner, she was herself abused and trapped. The CWJ study on Women who Kill explored the issues arising for Black and minoritised women, and identified very similar themes to those we identify in this report:²⁵



♀ Packiam Ramanathan

♀ Farieissia Martin



24 CWJ "Women Who Kill: How the state criminalises women we might otherwise be burying" https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5aa98420f2e6b1ba0c874e42/t/602a9a87e96acc025de5de67/1613404821139/CWJ_WomenWhoKill_Rpt_WEB-3+small.pdf

25 See Appendix 2 of the Women Who Kill report dedicated to the experiences of Black and minoritised women.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

1. Intersection of gender and race

National policing bodies to identify the intersection between gender and race as it affects victims and survivors of domestic abuse, and set out plans for how police forces should ensure that their work on 'race/ethnicity' addresses the issues raised in this research. The equality leads within forces should collaborate on this.

The NPCC should review its National Race Action Plan and add an addendum addressing the issues raised in this research.

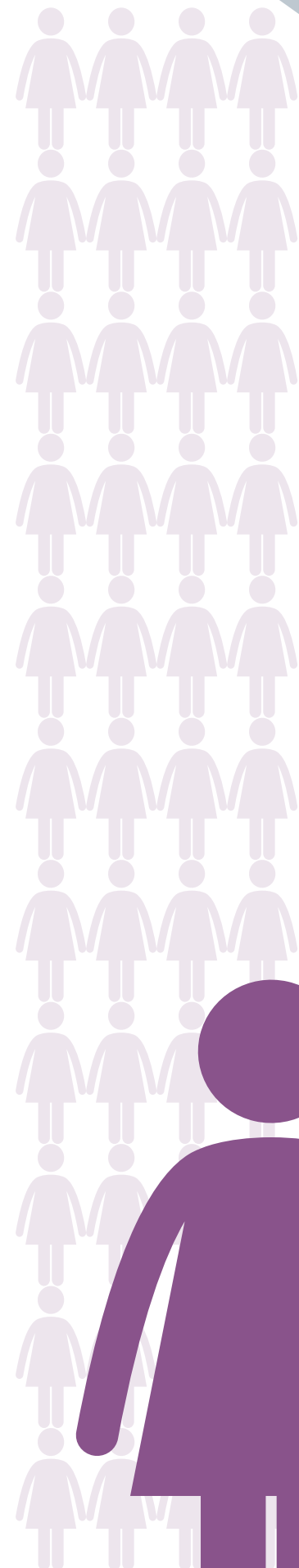
All systemic work on racism and misogyny carried out by forces to include the issues raised in this research as standard practice and collaborate with local 'by and for' services.

The National Vulnerability Action Plan (NVAP) 2023 work should be developed to implement issues raised in this research.

2. Training and development for professionals working with survivors of VAWG – within policing, social services and healthcare settings

Public bodies should develop and deliver trauma informed training for all employees that work with survivors of VAWG. Such training should cover not only the mental health impacts of all forms of VAWG, and the dynamics of coercive control, but also the specific intersectional and the cultural contexts for Black and minoritised women, including the impacts of systemic racism and unconscious bias. This should include the issues addressed in this research;

Such training should be mandatory for anyone dealing with VAWG and built into workforce development strategies, so that it is not one-off or ad hoc, and is linked to performance and accountability systems within organisations;



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Training and development should include not only initial training programmes but also ongoing programmes of professional development with focused sessions on core issues. Patterns of poly-victimisation such as HBA, sexual violence, immigration abuse, links to suicide risk and counter allegations leading to risks of criminalisation should form part of this training.

'By and for' service providers, with specialist expertise in dealing with these issues and should be commissioned to deliver this training collaboratively with employer bodies. Such expertise centres the disproportionate and different risks faced by Black and minoritised groups and the way in which systemic bias and institutional racism shapes women's experiences of violence and their pathways to accessing support.

3. Data gathering: the following steps should be taken in order to establish compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty

NPCC and College of Policing to require all forces to provide the following in relation to all domestic abuse flagged offences in the last annual reporting period:

- a. The proportion of victims-survivors for whom ethnicity is recorded on police force systems;
- b. The proportion of victims-survivors who are from Black or minoritised backgrounds (where recorded)
- c. The proportion of the population in the force area who are Black or minoritised
- d. Where there is a disproportionality between b. and c. to consider reasons for this and what actions to take to address it

Forces should introduce mandatory fields if completion of ethnicity data fields fall below a level that enables the force to reach meaningful conclusions on the ethnicity of those reporting domestic abuse.

HMICFRS to inspect force recording of ethnicity data for domestic abuse flagged cases, including the levels of data recording of ethnicity and, where sufficient data is available, any disproportionality in levels of reporting between white and Black and minoritised victims-survivors (including, where available, distinctions between different minoritised ethnic communities).



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If existing data is not sufficient to establish whether there is disproportionality, policing oversight bodies to commission robust research across England and Wales on this issue.

National policing bodies to review the current ethnicity recording system (IC codes) as applied to victims-survivors, as opposed to suspects, and introduce a national system that is effective for policy objectives relating to access to the criminal justice system.

4. **Disaggregation of data: the following steps should be taken in order to establish compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty**

The Home Office data on DHRs to include disaggregated data by a range of characteristics alongside ethnicity, including sex of the deceased, and intimate partner killings identified separately from family killings.

5. **Interpreters**

Policing bodies should ensure that forces meet their legal obligations under the Equality Act and the Istanbul Convention through the following:

- a. The Home Office should introduce a requirement for police forces to source a professional interpreter in every situation where a report is made of domestic abuse and an interpreter is required, including telephone interpreting services for immediate communication following 999 calls. Victims-survivors should not be required to provide their own interpreters. Interpreters should be obtained from independent and accredited professional interpreting services. The Victim's Code should be amended to reflect this duty.
- b. Victims-survivors should be provided with an interpreter of a sex of their choice whenever operationally practicable. The Victim's Code should be amended to provide for this, as well as College of Policing guidance and local police force domestic abuse procedures.



Executive Summary

The College of Policing should issue guidance on the use of interpreters in domestic abuse cases, including:

- That officers must not use the following as interpreters: family members, children, neighbours and any other person known personally to the victim-survivor who is not of her choosing
- Officers should not expect staff of domestic abuse support services to act as interpreters, though they should be present to provide support whilst a victim-survivor provides an account through a professional interpreter.
- Forces must ensure that use of interpreters does not cause excessive delay and monitor the time taken between reporting of an offence and the taking of a detailed account with an interpreter.
- Forces must ensure that evidence that is not in English is collected in the same way as any other evidence and a translation obtained.

6. No Recourse to Public Funds

We support the calls of Southall Black Sisters and Step Up Migrant Women network to end the two tier system of support for migrant survivors. In particular, to expand the DDVC and DVILR scheme to include all victims and survivors with insecure immigration status and increase support to six months. The Government must honour its obligations under the Istanbul Convention to meet the needs of all victims of domestic abuse.

For more info stepupmigrantwomen.org

7. Data sharing with immigration enforcement

The Home Office should implement the recommendations of the HMICFRS in the super-complaint on data sharing with immigration enforcement to create a 'firewall', enabling victims-survivors of domestic abuse to report abuse to the police within a 'safe space'.

DHRs should be required to record the immigration status of the deceased in every case where the deceased is not a UK national.



8. Referral pathways for women to 'by and for' services

All police forces (via their equality leads) should ensure that they identify the range of local 'by and for' domestic abuse services available in their area, build relationships with them, including around referral pathways, and implement systems to ensure direct referrals by domestic abuse units and other officers dealing with domestic abuse cases.

Mainstream domestic abuse, IDVA or other victim support services should ensure that Black and minoritised survivors are given a choice of referral to local 'by and for' services.

Mainstream domestic abuse services should ensure parity for Black and minoritised survivors they support, including those with NRPF on the DDVC, and ensure partnership working with local 'by and for' services to seek expertise where required, for example on immigration status and language barriers.

9. Forced Marriage and Honour Based Abuse

There should be full implementation of the statutory and best practice guidance on forced marriage and HBA, including identification through effective risk assessment. Standard risk assessment tools must have a question on HBA for all first responders. The 'one chance' rule must also be used for early intervention. Monitoring and enforcement systems must ensure their effective implementation.

10. Sustainable funding for the 'by and for' sector

There needs to be a long-term commitment to a sustainable solution that considers the health of the 'by and for' sector as a whole, not merely an opportunity for some organisations to bid for a one-off pot at a particular point in time. It should be grant based and not subject to a competitive tendering model which favours larger generic services without specialist expertise.

'By and for' organisations should be able to bid on their own terms without the inherent structural disadvantages they face when forced to compete with better funded generic VAWG providers or local public sector bodies. There is a need for a unified definition and consultation with 'by and for' organisations on the most appropriate model for funding such needs led funding, with key organisations like Imkaan, Women's Aid Federations, Southall Black Sisters, London VAWG consortium.



11. Domestic Homicide Reviews use of 'cultural experts'

The Home Office should issue guidance on use of 'cultural experts' in DHRs:

- a. to clarify that input from a 'cultural expert' is required for all DHRs involving Black and minoritised women;
- b. to clarify who is suitable to take on this role. Such roles should be occupied by those from 'by and for' domestic abuse services. It is not appropriate for this role to be undertaken by someone without domestic abuse expertise. Criteria can be developed with input from the 'by and for' sector.

The Home Office should monitor whether experts are being used in suitable cases and who experts are, as part of the quality assurance process.

A 'cultural expert' should always be a member of the panel and their role recognised as being broader than explaining 'cultural' matters. As a panel member they should be able to raise issues that they identify themselves and comment on all issues that arise from their own independent perspective.

Where necessary to ensure this expert perspective is available, funding for the expert's time in contributing to the process should be made available

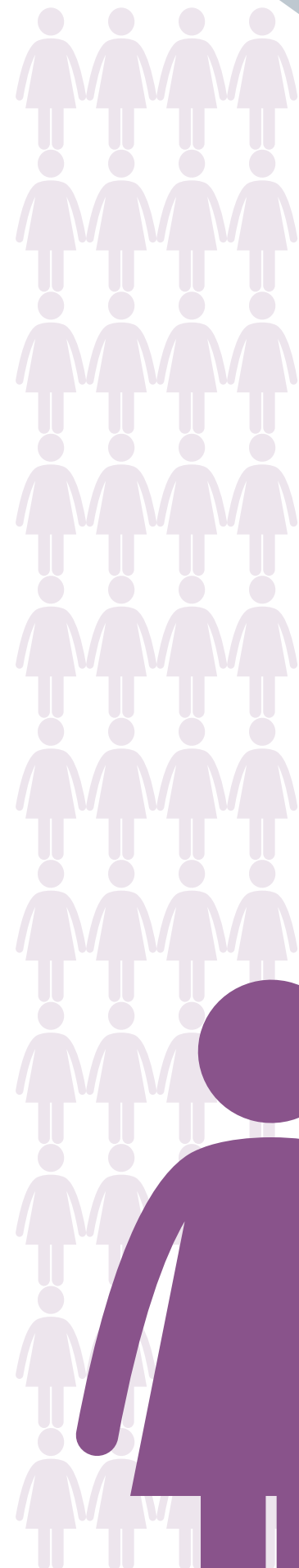
12. Independent Office of Police Conduct

'Race'/ethnicity' should always form a part of Terms of Reference in IOPC investigations in cases involving domestic homicides where the deceased is a Black or minoritised woman.

13. Inquests

Home Office DHR guidance should require, in all cases where the DHR chair identifies state failings that may have contributed to the death, that the chair sends a copy of the DHR report to the Coroner in the relevant area in which the death occurred, for them to consider whether the inquest should be resumed or re-opened. The family of the deceased should be informed of this and told that they may wish to seek independent legal advice about the inquest.

Guidance to Coroners should require the Record of Inquest to record the ethnicity of the deceased, using standardised categories, to allow for national data collection.



14. Investigation of suicide

The Department of Health and Social Care should commission research into the prevalence of suicide in the context of domestic abuse for Black and minoritised women, including exploration of whether suicide rates are disproportionately high for women from certain communities, in particular South Asian communities. Any findings should be integrated into national and local suicide prevention strategies and into the NICE guidelines on suicide prevention.

The College of Policing must include clear guidance on notification by police forces to CSPs in suicide cases. Its guidance on sudden and unexpected deaths, should require in all suspected suicides that officers conduct searches on police systems for any history of domestic abuse and speak with the family, colleagues and friends of the deceased to explore any knowledge of domestic abuse, before a decision on notification is made.

The Home Office should establish clear criteria for CSPs on when a DHR is required in suicide cases, including the length of time between any known domestic abuse and the death.

Forced suicide under honour based crime should be considered when dealing with relevant ethnic communities where HBV may be a particular feature.

The Home Office should disaggregate and publish the number of DHRs in suicide cases separately from homicides, and disaggregate these by both ethnicity and sex of the deceased.



