Written evidence submitted by the National Police Chiefs' Council (COR0209)

Dear Yvette Cooper,

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic there has been widespread concern over the impact on domestic abuse victims and potential increase in domestic homicide. As the National Policing leads with responsibility for Domestic Abuse, Homicide and wider Violence and Public Protection (VPP) we were asked if there were any particular actions police forces should take to prevent homicide during lockdown. As such we set up the Domestic Homicide project to establish quick time knowledge and rapid learning for policing across England and Wales. Having collated data regarding all domestic homicides recorded by police forces in England and Wales since March 2020, the overall numbers are not significantly different to those reported through the same period in 2019. Whilst an anticipated rise did not occur during lockdown periods we have identified features which may assist in future homicide prevention.

Homicide trend data for a period of less than 3-5 years tends to be statistically difficult to analyse due to the very small numbers; therefore, we suggested looking at each and every domestic homicide to establish if COVID-19 and lockdown were contributory factors. The work was commissioned by ourselves in our NPCC capacities and involved joint working between the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP), College of Policing (COP) and the Home Office (HO). We have retained strategic oversight throughout. The 6 week pilot provided a successful proof-of-concept and the main project was commissioned by the Home Office to continue until March 2021.

To date the project has provided the following benefits –

> **We have developed a unique and pioneering dataset of domestic homicides and suicides following domestic abuse which does not exist elsewhere.** This provides 'live time' data and rapid learning for Government and police to track the prevalence of domestic homicide and identifies the various typologies of victims and perpetrators. The project has identified several predictive factors which have been prevalent in homicides during lockdown. These factors will assist police in producing accurate risk assessments when attending domestic abuse incidents. Victim suicide is not captured in other domestic homicide datasets, and our research has revealed the scale and prevalence of suicide by victims of domestic abuse. Whilst all of these deaths will have been subject to a Coroner's inquest, this review, at scale, provides a foundation for further exploration of this tragic phenomenon.

> **We have synthesised the existing literature and evidence base on domestic homicide and domestic suicide**. This assists police analysis and supports wider academic research. Several academics are interested in using the data to assist other studies into violence and managing perpetrators, thereby amplifying the impact and use of this dataset beyond the project's core remit.

> **The project's evidence and learning is being used already by forces to identify and prevent domestic homicide and suicide**. Every month we are sharing learning with forces, government, domestic abuse and homicide leads via a system of monthly reports, Steering

groups, and tailored thematic briefings. Already forces have applied the project findings on risk factors within their Recency, Frequency and Gravity (RFG) indexes to identify the most dangerous perpetrators to offender manage. Both national and regional communication campaigns can benefit from the learning within the project. These include key messages for policing and the wider public regarding the risks surrounding non-fatal strangulation and separation and appropriate risk assessment, flagging and safeguarding

We have collated innovative practice on domestic abuse and homicide prevention from across forces. This gives us some indication of promising practice being adopted, which we plan to explore with domestic abuse leads before the project end. Continuation funding would allow us to evaluate some of these initiatives more robustly, to test the impact on homicide prevention.

Beyond March 2021 we can see a clear continued need for this work which will enable us to capitalise on this year's investment. Improving our understanding of the nature and features of domestic homicide is key to underpinning our ability to prevent. We also can see a natural synergy between this work and the separate but related Home Office plans to develop a national repository of Domestic Homicide Reviews.

To evidence the value of this work we can provide an interim project report which summarises emerging findings to date, explains what will be achieved by the project end in March, and describes how analysis and learning could be developed beyond March.

Yours Sincerely

CC Simon Bailey QPM
Chief Constable
Norfolk Constabulary
National Policing Lead
Child Protection and Abuse
Investigation

AC Louisa Rolfe OBE
Assistant Commissioner
Metropolitan Police Service
National Policing Lead for Domestic Abuse

DAC Stuart Cundy QPM
Deputy Assistant Commissioner
Metropolitan Police Service
National Policing Lead for Homicide

Bernie O'Reilly
Interim Chief Executive Officer, College of Policing

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