

THE CHANNEL 4 DISPATCHES CHILD HOMICIDE STUDY

MAIN FINDINGS

Background information

Dispatches collated data on child homicides by parents and carers over the last 5 years (2004-2008) from court reports, inquests and summaries of official serious case reviews carried out for local children's safeguarding boards.

We obtained detailed information on 163 child homicides in 83 different local authority areas. These 163 children belonged to 135 cases/families. There are more child homicides than cases because – frequently – more than one child was killed in the same family.

Dispatches obtained less detailed information on another 20 children who were killed – e.g. the ages of the deceased children; the gender and relationship of the people charged with manslaughter or murder and whether or not the killer committed suicide at the time.

Criteria for inclusion in the study:

- children killed by biological parents
- children killed by the sexual partners of biological parents – whether cohabiting or not
- children killed by child minders with whom the parents had left the children

Excluded were children killed by other youths (e.g. in gang fights on the street) and children killed by complete strangers.

To qualify as a 'killer' the parent or carer must have been charged or convicted of one of the following offences – a) murder; b) manslaughter; c) causing or allowing the death of a child

Excluded from the study were cases where the parent had concealed the pregnancy and the child was born dead.

N.B. The data for 2008 is less complete than other years because many murder cases had not yet gone to court, while the public executive summaries of case reviews into child homicides are not normally published until after legal proceedings are completed.

The larger (less detailed) sample consists of 183 children killed in 92 different local authorities (154 cases).

LARGER SAMPLE – KEY FINDINGS

NUMBER OF CASES & CHILDREN

N.B. There are more children than cases, because sometimes more than one child in the family was killed by a parent or carer. More than one child was killed in the same incident in 22 (14%) of cases in the larger sample of 154 cases.

Year	No of families in which a homicide took place	No. of children who died as a result of parent & carer homicide	<i>Additional cases – less detailed information</i> <i>No of cases</i>	<i>No. of children who died</i>	TOTAL NO OF FAMILIES IN LARGER SAMPLE	TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN LARGER SAMPLE
2004	23	26	3	3	26	29
2005	31	32	1	1	32	33
2006	28	38	3	3	31	41
2007	41	52	4	3	45	55
2008	12	15	8	10	20	25
TOTAL	135	163	19	20	154	183

The numbers of children being killed by parents and carers increased between 2005 and 2007.

In addition to homicides of children, there were 9 cases where newborn babies died as a result of concealment of pregnancy and failure to seek medical attention at the time of birth.

Year	No. of concealment cases (Babies born dead – where the pregnancy was concealed)
2004	NK
2005	NK
2006	4
2007	3
2008	2
TOTAL	9

In addition to homicides of children, there were sometimes homicides of adults at the same time, most frequently the children's mothers – most frequently where there had been a prior history of domestic violence.

Year	Cases involving adults in addition to children (e.g. mother, adult siblings, mother's partner, mother's brother)
2004	2
2005	3
2006	7
2007	5
2008	2
TOTAL	19

GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS WHERE THE CHILDREN WERE KILLED (N= 154 families - larger sample)

There were homicides by parents or carers in 92 different local authorities throughout the country between 2004 and 2008 ranging from the Shetland Isles in the far north of Scotland to Cornwall in the South West of England.

Of those 154 cases, 17 occurred in Local Authorities judged to be inadequate at keeping children safe in Ofsted's latest (2008) inspection report – i.e. Haringey, Birmingham, Doncaster, Essex, Reading, Surrey, West Sussex, Wokingham).

16 areas had more than two homicides during this period.

AGES OF CHILDREN KILLED (N = 183 – larger sample)

	No.	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	%
Less than 1 yr	62	9	16	13	17	7	34%
1 year	27	7	4	4	9	3	15%
2 years	20	5	3	1	7	4	11%
3 years	14	1	4	4	2	3	8%
4 years	8	1	0	1	5	1	4%
5 years	11	2	1	3	4	1	6%
6 years	9	1	2	2	2	2	5%
7-11 years	7	1	0	1	2	3	4%
8-11 years	10	1	2	4	2	1	5%
12-15 years	11	1	0	5	3	2	6%
16-17 years	4	0	0	2	2	0	2%
TOTAL	183	29	32	40	55	27	100%

Children under 5 (aged 0-4) formed the vast majority of cases - 68% of cases

Because children under the age of one are the most vulnerable – one third of cases (34%), we carried out a separate age analysis for these 62 children.

This revealed that babies are significantly more likely to be killed in the first three months of their lives – 51% of the sample of under ones.

AGES OF CHILDREN KILLED AGED UNDER ONE (N = 62)

Age	No.	% of total children killed
Less than 1 month	7	11%
1 month	10	16%
2 months	6	10%
3 months	9	14%
4 months	11	17%
5 months	3	5%
6 months	2	3%
7 months	0	0%
8 months	6	10%
9 months	2	3%
10 months	3	5%
11 months	3	5%
TOTAL	62	99

MEANS OF KILLING – JAN 2004-DEC 2008 (Larger sample N=183 children)

- 2 out of 5 children were killed as a result of punching or kicking
- 1 in 10 children in the sample were stabbed
- 1 in 10 were suffocated or smothered
- 1 in 10 died in house fires

	Number	Percentage
Beaten, punched (with hands) or kicked	73	40%
Stabbed	20	11%
Fire – died of smoke inhalation and/or burns	19	10%
Suffocated or smothered	18	10%
Ingested drugs – e.g. methadone, sleeping pills	11	6%
Beaten with blunt instrument – e.g. baseball bat	8	4%
Strangled	7	4%
Drowned	5	3%
Starved + dehydrated	4	2%
Parent jumped off bridge or tall building	3	2%
Gassed with car exhaust	2	1%
Parent jumped in front of train	2	1%
Run over with vehicle	2	1%
Shot	1	0.5%
Burnt on stove	1	0.5%
Unconfirmed (or awaiting inquests)	7	4%
TOTAL	183	100%

GENDER OF KILLER (N=154 cases/families – larger sample)

- Males were the killers – either singly or jointly - in 70% of cases
- Females were the killers – either singly or jointly – in 42% of cases
- In cases where two adults were jointly charged, one was normally convicted of murder (almost always the male) and one of ‘causing or allowing’ the death of a child by not seeking medical attention (almost always the mother).
- Taking killers who acted alone, males were twice as likely as females to kill children – 58% compared with 29%

	No.	Percentage
Male killer alone	90	58%
Male and female killer together	18	12%
Female killer alone	44	29%
Two female killers (mother & sister – drugs case)	1	1%

TOTAL CASES	154	100%
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RELATIONSHIP OF KILLER TO CHILD (N=154 cases/families – larger sample)

- The killer or killers were the child's biological mother or father in 72% of cases
- The killer was the mother's partner or new boyfriend – either singly or jointly – in 20% of cases
- In the other 8% of cases, the killer was a childminder – usually not biologically related to the children.

	Number	Percentage
Biological father on own	63	41%
Biological mother on own	42	27%
Both biological parents jointly	8	5%
Mother's current boyfriend or partner on own	15	10%
Mother's ex-boyfriend alone	4	3%
Mother + mother's new partner jointly	9	6%
Stepfather (mother remarried)	2	1%
Mother and half sister	1	0.6%
Father + father's new partner	1	0.6%
Mother's female cousin and her boyfriend	1	0.6%
Child's uncle	1	0.6%
Father's mentally ill lodger	1	0.6%
Female child minder	2	1%
Male child minder	2	1%
Childminder's boyfriend	1	0.6%
Male - relationship not known	1	0.6%
TOTAL cases	154	100%

AGE OF KILLERS – DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBERS OF VERY YOUNG PARENTS

N = 154 – where age of parent known

- Around one in three child homicides involved a parent or carer (most often the young mother's new boyfriend) who was aged 22 or under.

YEAR	Killers aged 22 or younger	Total no. of children killed where age of parent known	% homicides involving young parents	% total cases (n=154)
2004	2	23	9%	8%
2005	13	30	43%	41%
2006	10	31	32%	32%
2007	10	44	23%	23%
2008	7	19	37%	33%
TOTAL	42	147	29%	154

HOMICIDE/SUICIDE CASES

N.B. This data relates only to parental killers who committed suicide within 24 hours of the homicide – i.e. not those who later killed themselves in prison.

In total 23 killers committed suicide – 15% of cases. In addition there were another 7 serious attempts to commit suicide. Thus suicides or attempted suicides followed the child homicides in around 1 in 5 cases. Of the 23 killers who committed suicide, 16 were men (70%); 7 were women (30%)

Year & no. of child homicides	No. of cases killer committed suicide	% of all cases	No. of cases attempted suicide	% suicide & attempts of all cases
2004: 26	4	15%	0	15%
2005: 32	2	6%	1	16%
2006: 31	5	16%	1	19%
2007: 45	8	18%	2	22%
2008: 20	4	20%	3	35%
TOT 2004-08: 154	23	15%	7	19%

INFORMATION RELATING TO THE SMALLER SAMPLE OF HOMICIDES

The rest of the data relates to the smaller sample of cases in the Dispatches child homicide study – i.e. 135 cases and 163 children – where the team had access to court reports, inquests and executive summaries of serious case reviews (SCRs).

CHILDREN ON CHILD PROTECTION REGISTERS/SUBJECT TO CHILD PROTECTION PLANS

Only 11 children – 7% of the sample – were receiving any protection from children’s social services at the time of their deaths.

Year	Total no of children killed	No of children on child protection register/plan at time of death	% of children on protection plans
2004	26	2	8%
2005	32	2	6%
2006	38	2	5%
2007	52	4	8%
2008	15	1	7%
Total 2004-08 N=163	163	11	7%

WHETHER ‘KNOWN’ TO SOCIAL SERVICES

*Definition: Children ‘known’ to children’s social services = cases where a referral was made **at any time** in the past either formally by another statutory agency like the police; or informally by a relative or member of the public.*

Year	Total no of children killed	No of children known to Social Services (past referral)	% of all children killed	No of children on child protection register at time of death	% of all children killed known to social services at some time – INCLUDING those on protection plans at time of death
2004	26	15	58%	2	65%
2005	32	18	56%	2	62%
2006	38	14	37%	2	42%
2007	52	29	56%	4	63%
2008	15	7	47%	1	53%
Total 2004-08 N=163	163	83	51%	11	57%

WHERE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE A BACKGROUND FACTOR

N=163 children

Domestic violence was a background factor in 75 child killings – 46% of the killings Dispatches studied.

Domestic violence was a background factor in 41% of the cases - more than one child was killed in some of the families.

Year	No. of children killed where dv a factor	No. of children killed that year in Dispatches sample	% of children killed where domestic violence was a background factor
2004	10	26	38%
2005	15	32	47%
2006	22	38	58%
2007	21	52	40%
2008	7	15	47%
TOT	75	163	46%

Pregnancy as a possible risk factor for child homicide

In 11 – 8% - of cases the mother was pregnant at the time the child or children were killed.

NUMBERS & PERCENTAGES OF CHILDREN KILLED ON AN ACCESS VISIT – 2004 - 2008

Out of 163 child deaths where detailed information known, 20 children (12%) died on access visits

4 children were killed on court ordered contact visits.

Year & total number of children killed – where detailed information known	No. of children killed on an access visit	No. of children killed on an access visit where dv a known background factor
2004: 26	2	2
2005: 32	0	0
2006: 38	1	1
2007: 52	9	4
2008: 15	8	5
TOTAL: 163	20 (12%)	12

CASES WHERE PARENTAL SEPARATION WAS A BACKGROUND ISSUE

Separation is clearly a dangerous time for children. 43 children were killed soon after – or as a direct result of – their parents separating, or announcing plans/wishes to separate.

In the majority of such cases, there had been a prior history of domestic violence. This was true in 69% of cases.

In a few cases, separation was the trigger for parents with a pre-existing mental illness like depression – mostly female – to kill their children.

Numbers of children killed – parental separation a background issue

Year & total number of children killed that year	No. of children killed by females	No. of children killed by males	TOT	% of total children killed
2004: 26	0	3	3	12%
2005: 32	1	3	4	13%
2006: 38	0	11	11	29%
2007: 52	3	12	15	29%
2004-2007 N=148	4	29	33	22%
2008: 15	0	8	8	53%
TOTAL: N=163	4	37	41	25%

Cases – parental separation a background issue

Year & total number of cases	Female killers where separation an issue	Male killers where separation was an issue	TOT	% of total cases that year
2004: 23	0	2	2	9%
2005: 31	1	3	4	13%
2006: 28	0	6	6	21%
2007: 41	3	9	12	29%
2004-2007 N=123	4	20	24	20%
2008: 12	0	5	5	42%
TOTAL: N=135	4	25	29	21%

Dispute over contact as a possible risk factor for child homicide following separation

In 10 out of 29 cases where separation was a key background factor to the killing; there was a dispute over child access in 10 (34%) of these cases

Large age difference as a possible risk factor for child homicide following separation

In 10 of the 25 cases (40%) where a male parent killed following separation, the man was 8 years or more older than the woman.

SEPARATION CASES – WHETHER KILLERS WERE VIOLENT OR CONTROLLING

GENDER OF KILLER & numbers of cases	History of both violent & controlling behaviour	%	History physical violence only	%	History controlling behaviour only recorded	%	Killer not previously violent or controlling	N K
MALE: 25	14	56%	5	20%	3	12%	1	2
FEMALE: 4	1	25%	0	0%	1	100%	0	2
TOTAL: 29	15	52%	5	17%	4	14%	1	4

CASES WHERE THE KILLER HAD A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM

Criteria for inclusion: Cases where killer had a diagnosed mental health problem for which they were being treated prior to the killing; or were clients of adult mental health services at the time; or were sectioned and detained in a psychiatric hospital after the killing.

Excluded are cases where the defence argued in court that they were depressed or mentally ill at time, but there was no previous history of mental illness and the diminished responsibility defence was not accepted by the jury.

There were 37 cases where the killer had a pre-diagnosed mental health problem. These 37 killers were responsible for 50 child deaths – 1 in 3 of the child homicides in the Dispatches study sample.

Year	No. of cases where killer had mental health problem	% of cases N=135	Numbers of children killed	No of total children killed N=163	% of total children killed
2004: 23	5	21%	6	26	23%
2005: 31	10	32%	10	32	31%
2006: 28	7	25%	9	38	24%
2007: 41	14	32%	21	52	40%
TOT:2004- 2007 N=123	35	28%	46	148	31%
2008: 12	2	20%	4	15	27%
TOT: 135	38	28%	50	163	31%

GENDERS OF KILLERS: CASES WHERE KILLER HAD MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	24	63%
Male	14	37%
TOTAL	38	100%

TYPES OF ILLNESSES: CASES WHERE KILLER HAD MENTAL ILLNESS

TYPE OF ILLNESS	Females	Males	Total no of cases	% of mental health cases (n=37)
Depression general	9	5	14	37%
Post natal depression	5	0	5	13%
Paranoid schizophrenia/psychosis	6	3	9	24%
Mixed depression/delusion Depression/ paranoid thoughts; Manic depression	2	3	5	13%

Personality disorder	1	1	2	5%
Not specified – ‘known to mental health services’	1	2	3	8%
TOTAL	24	14	38	100%

- Depression was a pre-existing diagnosed mental health problem in 19 – 50% of cases where a mentally ill parent or carer killed a child
- Delusions or psychosis featured in 14 cases – 37% of the homicide cases where a parent was mentally ill.
- In 7 of these cases, the delusion featured the child in some way. Examples include the parent believing the children are not hers, or that she must protect them from paedophiles who are trying to kill them

SUICIDE/HOMICIDE CASES – MENTAL HEALTH BACKGROUND OF KILLERS

In only 8 of the cases where parents committed suicide after the killing, did the killer have a pre-existing diagnosis of mental illness.

Year & no. of child homicides	No. of cases killer committed suicide	No. of cases where killer had known mental illness prior to killing (diagnosed or being treated)	% of all homicide/ suicide cases
2004	4	1	25%
2005	2	2	100%
2006	5	1	20%
2007	7	4	57%
2008:	4	0	0%
TOT 2004-08	23	8	35%

CHILDREN KILLED BY PARENTS AND CARERS WITH A SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEM

N.B. We have detailed information on cases between 2004-2007 only.

- **30% of the parents and carers who killed children had substance abuse problems – 20% drug abuse; 11% alcohol abuse**

Year & total number of cases	No. of children killed where substance abuse – drugs or alcohol - a factor	Substance abuse as % of all children
2004: 23	8	35%
2005: 31	8	26%
2006: 28	9	32%
2007: 41	12	29%
2004-2007 N=123	37	30%

PARENTAL DRUG ABUSE CASES

Year & total number of cases	Children killed with parent/s with drug abuse problem	Drugs % total cases	Child died ingesting methadone/ heroin substitute subutex
2004: 23	4	17%	2
2005: 31	4	13%	2
2006: 28	6	21%	2
2007: 41	10	24%	1
2004-2007 N=123	24	20%	7

PARENTAL ALCOHOL ABUSE CASES

Year & total number of cases	Parent/s alcohol abuse problem	Substance abuse as % of all children
2004: 23	4	17%

2005: 31	4	13%
2006: 28	3	11%
2007: 41	2	5%
2004-2007 N=123	13	11%

HOMICIDES INVOLVING PARENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES:

6% of all parental child homicide cases involved parents with learning difficulties.

Year & total number of cases	No. of families in which parent or parents had significant learning difficulties
2004: 23	1
2005: 31	2
2006: 28	2
2007: 41	2
2004-2007 N=123	7 (6%)

PRE-PLANNED KILLINGS

Evidence that a killing had been pre-planned or premeditated includes: telling others; the buying of equipment used in the killing; suicide notes that admitted premeditation.

In around 1 in 5 cases the killing of the children was premeditated, most often after separation.

Numbers of premeditated child killings

Year & no. cases (No. of children killed in brackets.)	No. of killers who pre-planned the homicide	% of killers who pre-planned the homicide	No of children killed in pre-planned cases	% of children killed in pre-meditated cases	No of cases where killer also killed their adult partner
2004: 23 (26)	3	13%	4	17%	1
2005: 31 (32)	4	13%	5	16%	0
2006: 28 (38)	2	7%	4	11%	1
2007: 41 (52)	10	24%	12	23%	0
TOTAL: 2004- 2007 N = 123 (N=148)	19	15%	25	17%	2
2008: 12 (15)	6	60%	9	56%	1
TOTAL: 2004- 2008 N = 135 (N=163)	25	19%	34	21%	3

Advance warnings:

In 11 of the pre-planned cases, the killer told someone in advance that they would kill the children. Tragically these threats were not taken seriously.

Who they told:

- Partner/ex partner: 4 killers
- Family members: 2 killers
- Close friends: 2 killers
- Work colleagues: 2 killers
- Health professionals: 1 killer

Numbers of premeditated killings where the killer had a pre-diagnosed mental illness

KILLERS WHO PRE-PLANNED THE HOMICIDES	Killers with pre-diagnosed mental illness	% pre-planned cases
Males: N=15	1	7%
Females: N= 10	9	90%
Total: N=25	10	40%

- In total, around 40% of the killers who pre-planned the killings had a diagnosed existing mental illness. However, there were major differences by gender.
- Almost all (90%) of the female killers who pre-meditated the killings had a pre-diagnosed mental illness.
- Only 1 out of 15 of the male killers had a pre-diagnosed mental health problem – 7%.

Characteristics of killers who pre-planned the killing – violent, abusive and controlling behaviour

N.B. These statistics could be an underestimate. The data is gathered from evidence given at trials and inquests.

The data suggests that over-controlling and obsessive behaviour – far more than physical violence – may be a significant risk factor for child homicides.

KILLERS WHO PRE-PLANNED THE HOMICIDES	Killers previously physically violent to partners	% pre-planned case	Killers with obsessive or over-controlling behaviour to partners	% pre-planned cases	Killers with obsessive or over-controlling behaviour to their children	% pre-planned cases
Males: N=15	8	53%	10	67%	5	33%
Females: N= 10	0	0%	3	30%	4	40%
Total: N=25	8	32%	13	52%	9	36%

Other findings in relation to pre-planned cases 2004-2008

- All but one of the killers were biological parents of the children
- or divorce was an issue in 17 of the pre-planned cases – 68% of all pre-planned cases.
- In 9 cases (32%), the killer was described in the press quoting people who knew them well; or by coroners at inquests - as 'devoted' parents.
- In 8 of these cases, there was an argument over access or contact arrangements with the children.
- Of the 25 killers who planned the murders, 15 (60%) were male and 10 (40%) were female.
- 20 of the 25 killers either committed suicide or attempted suicide after the child homicide; 11 men and 9 women.

KILLERS WHO WERE NOT BIOLOGICAL PARENTS OF THE CHILDREN (N = 41)

- 41 cases involved killers who were not related to the children – 30% of total cases. The number of children killed was 44. In the vast majority of these cases (73%), the killer was the mother's new or ex (male) boyfriend or partner.
- The vast majority of these new partners and boyfriends had been also or previously violent to female adult partners in 77% of cases, and to other children in 17% of cases.

KILLERS RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILDREN	No. of cases	% of total cases where killer not related to child N=41	Previous history of violence to adults	Previous history of violence to children
Mother's boyfriend –cohabiting	22	54%	16	5
Mother's boyfriend – not cohabiting	2	5%	2	0
Mother's new husband – stepfather (married)	2	5%	1	0
Mother's ex boyfriend – unmarried, separated	4	10%	4	0
Male killers with whom mother is/was in intimate relationship	30	73%	23 (77%)	5 (17%)
Father's girlfriend – unmarried but cohabiting	1	2%	0	0
Child's uncle	1	2%	0	0

Child's mother's cousin	1 joint		<i>NK</i>	<i>NK</i>
Childminder or babysitter	7	17%	0	0
TOTAL: N = 41			23 (56%)	5 (12%)

MOTHERS NEW PARTNERS – HOW LONG COHABITING PRIOR TO KILLING CHILDREN?

40% of these men killed the children within 3 months of moving into the family home. 76% had killed the child within a year of cohabiting. The term 'mother's new boyfriend or partner' would be more appropriate than 'stepfather' in the majority of cases.

Only 5 of the 27 killers with whom the biological parent was in an intimate relationship at the time (or had been in the past) could be counted as stepfathers – i.e. in relationships with the mother that had lasted a year or more.

	0-3 months	4-6 months	6-12 months	Over a year	NK
Mother's boyfriend – unmarried but cohabiting N=22	10	2	6	3	1
Mother's husband – stepfather N=2	0	0	0	2	0
Father's girlfriend – unmarried but cohabiting N=1	0	0	1	0	0
TOTAL: 25	10	2	7	5	3
% of cases where non bio killer cohabiting	40%	8%	28%	20%	16%

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES OF SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS – KEY FINDINGS

Executive summaries of SCRs were obtained for 82 out of the 135 homicide cases in the Dispatches detailed study – i.e. in 61% of cases. There is no reason to believe that these are not representative of the whole sample.

Note that one case could involve multiple failures by the same or different agencies, so the numbers of failings is more than the number of cases in most instances.

SOCIAL SERVICES FAILINGS

Of the 82 SCRs we examined, 51 mentioned Social Services failings (62%) of case reviews.

FAILURE	NO OF CASES FAILING WAS MENTIONED
Risk assessment carried out poor or inadequate	18
Failure to carry out any risk assessment	6
No core (in depth) assessment carried out when one was warranted	6
Risk to child of parental drug misuse not assessed or given sufficient weight	6
Failure to consider the significant male figure in risk assessment process – or well enough. If had, would have raised level of concern.	20 (24%)
Too much focus on mother’s needs rather than the child’s needs	3
Failure to call a multi-agency meeting to exchange information relevant to risk assessment/insufficient sharing of information	8
No multi-agency risk assessment meeting took place and/or insufficient information sharing between different agencies	12
Total number of cases/killers where some failure of RISK ASSESSMENT mentioned as a social services failing	49 (60%)
Failure to act on, or follow up appropriately on referrals	12
Failure to assess - or underestimation of - risk to children where domestic violence a key background feature	26 (32%)
Failed to refer to other agencies	2
Total number of cases/killers where social workers failed to take any action following a referral from another agency	12 (15%)
Too few home visits carried out	3

POLICE FAILINGS

In 27 out of the 82 SCRs police failings were mentioned – that’s 33% of case reviews.

Of the 27 police failing cases, the majority 19 (70%) were cases in which domestic violence was a key background factor.

POLICE FAILURE – CASES IN WHICH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WAS A KEY FACTOR	No of cases where domestic violence to adult was background factor	No of cases where adult mental health illness a background factor	No of cases where drug abuse of adult was a background factor	Other	TOTAL
Failure to share info/ refer children potentially at risk to children’s services	10	2	2	1	15
Failure to recognised or identify that children might be at risk – focus on the adult rather than the child	9	2	0	0	11
Total cases either failure to refer to children’s services or failure to recognise risk	17	4	2	1	24
Failure to record or charge incidents as crimes	4	0	0	1	5
Total cases where there was a failure (some overlap as one case could include more than one failure.)	19	4	2	2	27

HEALTH SECTOR FAILINGS

53 CASES OUT OF 82 SCR EXEC SUMMARIES MENTIONED SOME HEALTH SECTOR FAILING – THAT'S 65% OF CASES

- 30 (37%) – relating to Health Visitors
- 20 (24%) – Hospital staff
- 14 (17%) – GP
- 14 (17%) – cases where parent had a mental illness

FAILURE: TOTAL HEALTH SECTOR CASES	No. cases	% of 82 SCR cases
Risk assessment carried out was poor or inadequate; failure to take all relevant factors into consideration	28	34%
Failure to refer to social services	19	23%
Failure to follow up on missed appointments for child	22	27%
Failure to identify or investigate or record suspicious injuries as non accidental	12	15%
Failure to assess risk to child at all, or separately from adult	6	7%
Lost contact – failure to follow up child in need/at risk when moving area	5	6%
Failure to follow up on missed health appointments for adults	6	7%
Failure to include birth fathers/significant males in assessments	2	2%
Lack of training or understanding of effects of parental mental illness on child	2	2%
Lack of training or understanding of effects of parental substance abuse on child	1	1%
Failure to link multiple attendances in different hospitals	2	2%
Total cases where a health sector failing was stated (some overlap as one case could include more than one category of failure.)	53	65%

Missed medical appointments as a warning factor: mentioned in 22 out of 82 SCRs

20 SCRs mentioned multiple missed health appointments for child
2 mentioned single missed appointments in relation to children already of concern to health visitors

6 SCRs mentioned missed check up appointments by parents with mental illnesses (4) or drug abuse problems (2)

5 SCRs mentioned refusal by parents to engage or co-operate with additional 'services' that have been offered

MENTAL HEALTH CASES: HEALTH SERVICE FAILURES

Number of SCR cases which mention a parent had a diagnosed mental illness prior to the killing: 28 cases
Of these, number of SCRs which mention an explicit mental health service failing: 14 (50%)

FAILURE IN MENTAL ILLNESS-RELATED CASES	Number of cases failing stated
Failure to assess risk to child separately from adult	6
Poor or inadequate risk assessment undertaken	9
Total number of cases where there was a failure of assessment	14
Failure to follow up on missed mental health appointments	4
Lack of training or understanding of effects of parental mental illness on child	1
Total number of cases with mental health service failing	14

HEALTH VISITOR FAILINGS

30 cases where a health visitor failing was stated – 37% of case reviews

FAILURE OF HEALTH VISITING SERVICES	No. of cases failing was stated
Failure assessing risk to child, or all relevant factors pertaining to risk	13
Missed appointment – failure to take action	10
Failure to refer child to social services	8
Lost contact - failure to monitor/follow up on moving:	5
Total cases/killers where a failure by health visiting services was stated	30

GP FAILINGS

14 cases where a GP failing was stated – 17% of case reviews

GP FAILURES	Number of cases failing stated
Failure to assess risk to child	5
Failure to spot non accidental injuries	3
Failure to refer concerns	3
Failure to follow up or monitor child when appointments missed	3
Total cases where GP failing stated	14

HOSPITAL STAFF FAILINGS

20 cases where a hospital staff failing was stated – 24% of case reviews

HOSPITAL FAILURE	Number of cases failing stated
Failure to refer to social services	10
Failures to identify /record suspicious injuries as non-accidental	9
Poor risk assessment of child or parenting capacity of adult carers	9
Failure to link multiple attendances in different hospitals	2
Lack of a safe discharge plan	1
Total number of cases/killers where there was one or more hospital failing	20