



WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

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Dear Miss Williamson

I write in reply to your letter and Regulation 28 report in respect of the inquest touching the death of David Robert Oldfield. We also sought and received further clarification from yourself concerning the points you raised and I attach copies of all the correspondence to assist.

I had hoped to respond earlier but our senior officer with responsibility for professional standards who was dealing with the matter has recently moved to the National Crime Agency and I needed to first meet with his successor which has had to be postponed due to leave and operational matters. I apologise for the delay.

Your regulation 28 report highlighted four matters of concern:

The further comments we received from you in relation to the first two (the safe usage of Taser and the importance of its use in appropriate and justifiable circumstances) made it clear that these required no additional response from us, but were to highlight issues for our awareness. I will however return to these at the conclusion of the letter.

Issues three and four related to the accounts given to the Inquest by officers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in relation to the circumstances immediately preceding the use of the Taser. The fact that you were raising concerns regarding the evidence of these officers was clearly a matter of importance to us and one which we would seek involvement of the IPCC to ensure independence and transparency:

By coincidence, I was the senior officer on duty on the morning of the incident and was informed of it as I was travelling in to work. I therefore went directly to the Command Room and ensured the IPCC were informed immediately given the circumstances – and which in any event required a mandatory referral. The scene and the post mortem were attended by an IPCC investigator [REDACTED]. The IPCC investigated the circumstances over a period of 3 days (including the date of the incident) before deciding that it was appropriate for a local investigation by the force. The investigation would have been retained by them, had they had concerns over the use of the Taser.

As your regulation 28 report and clarifying letter has commented on the evidence the officers gave at the Inquest, I asked my head of professional standards to again review the case and to forward your correspondence to the IPCC. On the basis of this, the IPCC did not consider that the matter should be further referred to them. They did however state that their view may be different if:

- (i) You were alleging any dishonesty on the part of the officers' evidence (which may amount to perjury or conspiracy to commit perjury).

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- (ii) Whether there was evidence to support this or whether it was it was a matter of the differences in the evidence or interpretation of the facts given by the officers.
- (iii) Full transcripts were available for review.

We have again spoken with the barrister acting on our behalf, as the solicitor with conduct of the case was not in court at all times, and read the notes made by the solicitor who was in attendance when the officers gave evidence. This has not identified concerns about the officer's evidence. Whilst we accept that the accounts of these officers had differences (which were open to cross-examination) we believe these differences were in the nature of normal differences in witnesses' accounts rather than anything more sinister. It may be pertinent that the officers who used the Taser were authorised firearms officers with significant training and experience in dealing with serious incidents such as the tragic events that morning, whereas the divisional officers were not so and indeed were in fear at the time, which can affect the perceptions of events. Although we would often seek to portray the professionalism and bravery of police officers, they are human as well. In making these observations, I do so merely to illustrate, accepting that I was neither at the incident nor the inquest. I recognise that it is entirely your prerogative as coroner to consider if there are any further matters (described in the preceding paragraph) to be forwarded to the IPCC.

Finally I return to the safe and appropriate usage of Taser issues covered at the beginning of my letter. I was aware that in the inquest, our evidence was mainly concerned with what had happened in connection with the sad events of the morning itself. Exploration of contextual issues such as our tactical training of Taser and the differences between deployments by authorised firearms officers compared with divisional officers may have been of assistance to the inquest. As the senior lead for West Yorkshire on Taser I am aware that its use is not widely understood and that we need to be open in explaining how it contributes to making the public safe. For example the force receives about a thousand "999" calls every day, yet on average we fire a Taser between once or twice a week. I would therefore offer the opportunity for you to visit our training facilities at Carr Gate in order to see for yourself how we train and use the Taser.

I hope that I have been able to clarify your concerns

Yours sincerely

