



**Giles York QPM
Chief Constable
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e-mail: [REDACTED]

13th March 2018

Ms Penelope Schofield
Coroner's Office
Country Record Office,
Orchard Street Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 1DD

Dear Ms Schofield,

Re: Inquest into the death of Paul HANTON – 7th December 2017

I write in response to your formal report under Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths.

Missing Person reports are always taken seriously by Sussex Police and our thoughts are with the family and friends of Paul Hanton. We are always willing to review and improve our practices, and how we work with partner agencies, to ensure better safety for all members of the public.

Within the report you highlight that during the course of the inquest the evidence revealed six matters of concern, and you felt that future deaths may occur unless action is taken to address them.

Points one, two and three (as numbered in the report) will be responded to by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust directly to you.

With regard to point four, new call handling guidance within the force missing person policy was published in September 2017 and outlines how the risk level must be recorded clearly within the CAD (incident log). A copy of this is attached titled 'Missing person policy, Appendix B: call handling guidance'. This followed a review of Sussex Police's response to Missing Persons. The detailed design process subject of consultation with all inspectors across the force. This established how risk decisions are made and applied in a consistent manner by all inspectors, and a training package was subsequently designed for all contact handlers and controllers taking them through the process of recording Missing Person incidents from the point of call. This included scenario based exercises and was delivered over a 12 week training cycle between January and March 2017 prior to the new process being invoked in May. It was further audited in June before the policy went live in September 2017. All inspectors who perform the role of the Duty Inspector were also required to attend a Continued Professional Development two day course between March and May 2017 around the management of threat, harm and risk and the need to document decisions clearly within CADs.

The guidance also outlines the level of response to Missing Persons following the decision to grade them as either high risk, medium risk, low risk or absent. Referrals to other forces however are not dependent on the risk grading but on the information and necessity to do so in order to locate the individual and ensure their safe return. The supervisor overseeing the initial report would consider the need to inform other forces - including British Transport Police – as soon as possible if there was the suspicion the missing person intended to travel outside of the county, whilst the handover process in place for managing Missing Person reports includes regular reviews and scrutiny which would identify the need to make such contact if it had not taken place.

Point five identifies the need to consider a joint policy with the Adult Safeguarding Board. Sussex Police and Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation have a jointly agreed policy relating to patients absent without leave / informal missing patients which applies to all patients including those detained under the Mental Health Act 1983, subject to Guardianship, Supervised Community Treatment Orders as well as those in hospital informally. The document provides guidance for managers and staff regarding duties, responsibilities and actions to be taken when a patient is absent without leave and provides the legal framework which sets out these duties and responsibilities. This Policy (a copy of which is attached) was due for review in November 2017 and is currently in the process of consultation with all partner agencies prior to the finalisation of any amendments and additions. It will also consider and include any recommendations from HM Coroner. As part of the review an approach to the Safeguarding Boards will be made to invite their comment on the policy, and if appropriate to include them as a partner agency in the Policy. In working closely with the Chief Executive of the Partnership Trust, I have also suggested introducing a mechanism that will allow us to monitor the use and effectiveness of this policy.

Point six asks the police to consider whether there is an equal response to informal as well as sectioned patients if they are assessed by clinical staff as high risk. I can assure you that whether they were an informal or sectioned patient would be noted but would not determine the level of response. This is determined by the level of risk which is a combination of the likelihood of harm coming to the missing person or the wider public, and the potential seriousness of harm that might result.

I am satisfied that we now have the relevant processes and policies in place, and that all decision makers have been appropriately trained.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Giles York', written in a cursive style.

Giles York
Chief Constable