



RECEIVED

17 APR 2019

Our Reference: ACC/JG/SJ
External Telephone: 01656 762902

11th April 2019

Dear Mr Hughes,

Re: Mr Matthew William Lewis (Deceased)

I refer to your letter dated 14th February 2019 addressed to the Chief Constable of South Wales Police as it has been passed to me. This letter is the Regulation 29 Response on behalf of the Chief Constable.

I have had the opportunity to consider wholly the contents of the Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths dated 13 February 2019 enclosed with your letter. The matters raised therein have been fully considered by the senior officers responsible for the South Wales Police Public Service Centre in an effort to ensure that we have addressed the concerns raised. This arises out of the Inquest into the death of the late Mr. Mathew William Lewis.

The matters of concern you have identified are contained in section 5 of the Regulation 28 Report. I have set this out below, for ease for reference:

- (1) Both [REDACTED] in their evidence expressed confusion as to the instructions that were passed to them by the call handler. In particular, whether they should approach Mr Lewis and attempt to cut him down or refrain from doing so in the interests of scene preservation.
- (2) The subsequent evidence of the Officer in Charge, [REDACTED] was to the effect that his primary role as a police officer was the preservation of life. The initial instructions of the call handler here appeared inconsistent with that expressed overriding duty.
- (3) In any hanging episode, time is very much of the essence following suspension. Whilst it could not be determined on the evidence the exact time that that occurred on 27.02.18, medical evidence received at the Inquest indicated that death/irreversible brain injury would likely occur, no later than 5 minutes post suspension. With such a narrow "rescue window", the clarity of instructions to willing rescuers appears paramount.

HEDDLU DE CYMRU

Pencadlys Heddlu De Cymru, Heol y Bont-faen, Penybont CF31 3SU
Mewn argyfwng ffoniwch 999, fel arall, ffoniwch 101
Gwefan: www.heddlu-de-cymru.police.uk

Mae Heddlu De Cymru yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.
Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

SOUTH WALES POLICE

South Wales Police Headquarters, Cowbridge Road, Bridgend CF31 3SU
In an emergency always dial 999, for non-emergencies dial 101
Website: www.south-wales.police.uk

South Wales Police welcomes receiving correspondence in Welsh and English.
Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Whilst it was found on the neither evidence that the actions of the call handler were directly, nor indirectly causative of Mr Lewis' death, there is a risk that in the future a repeat of confusing/inconsistent call handler instructions may lead to delay & potentially contribute to the prospects of an unsuccessful rescue.

(4) Guidance to/training for call handlers as to how to deal with such scenarios would seem desirable/mandated.

South Wales Police invest considerably in training call handlers to deal with a multitude of situations; however, a training scenario can never replicate the experience gained from with real incidents. In respect of this, I can confirm that South Wales Police have a procedure in place for new and inexperienced call handlers, where a trainer or more experienced operator monitors and is able to step in very quickly when the new operator is unsure of the advice they should be giving.

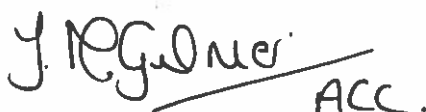
In addition, whilst there is no national guidance for this type of circumstance issued by the College of Policing to Call Handlers in Police Forces, South Wales Police has taken steps to develop a procedure for call handlers, which incorporates appropriate guidance into its force procedures. This new procedure is incorporated into the training that call handlers receive and in particular, the paragraph below that highlights the presumption that 'life is not extinct'.

"It is important to note that in any hanging scenario the emphasis is that the presumption must always be that that life is not extinct. It is recognised that no two incidents will be the same and there will be other factors that need to be taken into consideration. For example, the ability of the member of the public reporting the incident to assist; or to offer assistance without placing himself or herself in any jeopardy or danger; and the accessibility to the location in which the person is found hanging".

The guidance is designed for the call handler to engage with the caller in a constructive and meaningful way to determine the appropriate level of support and assistance, which may be provided until the arrival of the emergency services.

I hope that these actions address the points raise within your Regulation 29 notice, but if there are any further concerns, please let me know.

Yours sincerely,

 ACC.

Jenny Gilmer
Assistant Chief Constable