

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE



Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths – Joshua Blackham

Document details		
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Distribution	HM Coroner Mrs Heidi Connor	

Executive Summary:

This report has been written in response to actions outlined within section 6 of the coroners regulation 28 report following the investigation and inquest into the death touching Joshua Blackham.

HM Coroner's request for response to key areas of concern as follows:

1. Training – for Welfare Officers and those who supervise them.
2. It was suggested in evidence that a cadre of specialised Welfare Officers would be more effective than appointing individual officers with line management responsibilities. The advantages of this arrangement will be that the specialised skills would be held with that cadre, and that an individual officer who has been suspended from duty may feel reluctant to discuss personal matters with a senior officer in his/her own management line. I consider this suggestion should be considered by Surrey Police.
3. Consideration should be given as to how communication of concerns between PSD and the Welfare Officer can take place more effectively.
4. Consideration should be given to the Welfare Officer contacting the family of the officer suspended from duty, to gain further information, where appropriate consent has been given.

5. Any new arrangement should make allowances for contact with a Welfare Officer where the primary Welfare Officer is off duty.
6. There should be a written policy as to the location of the arrest of a serving officer, so as to reduce the impact of this on his/her welfare.

Surrey Police response

(In respect of the order in which the points appear above):

1. The Force has agreed to provide training and refreshed guidance for any officer/staff member who is assigned as Welfare Officer (previously referred to as Wellbeing and Support Officers). Surrey Police's Learning and Development Department are in the process of creating a short video which will fully explain the Welfare Officer (WO) role which all WOs, on being assigned the role, will watch as part of a full guidance package. This package will include revised Welfare Officer Guidance documentation. This is anticipated to be finalised by the end of August 2019 with all Senior Management Teams across the Force being briefed from September 2019.

Under the new process all WOs, will be assigned a lead from their Senior Management Team (SMT) who will be responsible for briefing the WO on their role using the new material and will then remain as point of contact for the WO offering support and guidance. They will ensure that risk assessments are completed in a timely fashion, providing suitable oversight and scrutiny.

The Duty of Care Risk Assessment (DOCRA) is being re-written and will be the only document used to record risk to an individual and the steps being taken to mitigate that risk. [This replaces the risk assessment document which was used in Joshua's case]. The DOCRA will be updated every 28 days as a minimum (or more frequently as the risk requires) and will be sent by the WO to their SMT lead for comments. Oversight of all persons who are subject to a DOCRA will become a standing agenda item at each monthly SMT meeting thereby ensuring that there is oversight of all cases, regardless of risk level.

2. A cadre of specialised WOs has been considered in more detail by the Force since the inquest but the Force has made the decision not to pursue this on the grounds that it is not practical and may not be in the person's best interest. Having a cadre limits the number of people undertaking the role and it is also important that the person involved has a say in who their WO is, which may not include anyone within a cadre. The Force felt that the selection of a WO should be considered by the relevant SMT for the area/department where the person works and that with the introduction of training, revised guidance and managerial oversight a cadre of specialists was not necessary.
3. As to ensuring that all concerns about a person held by PSD, Federation, Unison or otherwise are available to the WO in completing their risk assessment, the new process will ensure that the DOCRA is completed having directly contacted all relevant parties. The default position will be that all information will be shared unless there is a specific reason not to do so which should be recorded with suitable justification. This way no relevant information is invisible to the WO. The new guidance is also accompanied by a simple visual flowchart for WOs as a reference document.
4. The matter of a WO considering contacting the family of an officer suspended from duty has been included in the revised guidance.

5. Having a secondary (back up) WO has been included in the revised process to ensure that there is suitable cover for annual leave or other absence. Contact details of all relevant persons supporting the particular officer/staff member will be listed at the front of the DOCRA.
6. Consideration about the location of the arrest of a serving officer so as to reduce the impact on his/her welfare has been included within the relevant PSD guidance policy.