



**Thames Valley Police Response to HM Coroner Heidi Connor**  
**following the inquest into the death of Leroy Junior Medford**

Thames Valley Police thank HM Coroner Mrs Heidi J Connor for her letter dated the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2019 and the attached copy of the regulation 28 report along with Narrative Conclusion and Factual Summing up.

This report is prepared in response to that report and a number of questions raised by HM Coroner following the inquest touching upon the death of Leroy Junior Medford following his detention in the Thames Valley Police custody suite at Loddon Valley Police station on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2017.

Thames Valley Police would again like to express their condolences to the family and friends of Leroy Junior Medford following his death.

**Drugs Concealment in Custody**

In relation to the issue of drugs concealment in police custody in Thames Valley Police a number of changes have been instigated since the death of Mr Medford. Many of these were touched on in the inquest, but following the inquest further work has been instigated which it is importance to sight you on.

TVP have initiated a comprehensive review process with a quarterly Drug Concealment Working Group linking the products of specific Gold Groups following adverse incidents in custody to other relevant drivers such as the Clinical Governance Board and national developments and doctrine (for example NPCC custody products).

In addition to training, awareness, and guidance, this governance process is driving activity in a number of areas including:

- Case strategy and decision-making: refreshed guidance for superintendents (to direct the continuation and cessation of drugs concealment cases) is being prepared – target is November 2019
- Partnership: there are number of workstreams to further develop the relevant healthcare pathways (e.g. the consistency of healthcare and the capacity of service providers) – the target for commissioned healthcare services is December 2019.
- Command: improved processes for operational command of prolonged incidents are being developed (e.g. handovers and review) – target is November 2019

- Resources: Cell watch teams have been increased from two to three persons enabling rotation between team members. This enables team members to take adequate breaks for the required level of concentration, and enables effective communication between the team and key stakeholders.
- Equipment, facilities and techniques: a wide array of reviews have been initiated including the use of restraints, specialist clothing, drugs toilet equipment, food, detainee washing etc. The findings are to be reviewed in October 2019.
- Officers working on a cell watch deployment now receive a specific briefing from the custody sergeant. This is recorded once received and to improve standardisation and to avoid any essence of doubt, TVP are now creating a video clip to be played to all officers on cell watch for those on the drugs protocol providing a visible representation of how to use the drugs toilet appropriately and how best to conduct such close watch on a detained person. We believe this is the first time this methodology has been in used in the country.

### **Training Concerns**

Point 5 of the Regulation 28 report to prevent future death requires Thames Valley police to provide a response to a number of questions raised about general police training.

These are:

1. The most effective way to deliver training to serving officers
2. The volume of this training
3. Whether training can be prioritised
4. How police forces can reassure themselves that training is not just being offered, but is also taken up
5. Whether officers are given adequate opportunity to carry our training
6. How officers can be encouraged to review relevant guidance in situations they are not regularly faced with
7. Access to and updating of online guidance and procedures

In response to these questions, Thames Valley Police report as follows:

1. The most effective way to deliver training to serving officers

The ownership of police training in Thames Valley Police lies in the People Services and Learning and Professional Development Command.

TVP uses a variety of training delivery methods depending on the subject matter and the target audience. These include face to face class room

training. This can be as part of a long or short course or as one of the regular training days which are part of the officers' shift pattern (Teams In Action days). It also includes e-learning delivered as NCALT packages or on the Moodle platform. Short briefings, at the start of an operational shift for example, are also used to impart information and allow for work based assessment.

2. The volume of this training

Volume is dictated by a number of factors: new legislation or changes to existing legislation, new policy or Approved Professional Practice, organisational learning or matters arising from performance issues. It is significant.

3. Whether training can be prioritised

Training is already prioritised through a governance structure with priorities signed off by the Chief Constable and his management team at a regular Training Prioritisation Board.

4. How police forces can reassure themselves that training is not just being offered, but also being taken up.

Prioritised training will normally be mandatory. Completion rates are monitored through a governance structure. Each Local Police Area and force department has a single point of contact for training and they are accountable to local Resourcing and Resilience panels which in turn are accountable to the force wide Resourcing and Resilience panel in relation to achieving high completion rates. TVP are able to pull completion data from the online platforms used to see who has viewed material and who has completed packages.

5. Whether officers are given adequate opportunity to carry out training.

Officers on Local Police Areas have 5 'Teams in Action' TIA training days built into their shift pattern every year. These are used to deliver mandatory training which requires face to face learning and often have licences attached – e.g. Officer Safety Training, First Aid. Officers attend these days as a mandated tour of duty. No shows are monitored and rescheduled. Shift Overlaps are also used for training – short face to face sessions or briefings as well as on-line learning. Supervisors also allocate time to officers for on line packages to be completed as part of an individual's continual professional

Development. This can then be recorded appropriately in the Police annual appraisal system called a PDR – Performance and Development Review.

6. How officers can be encouraged to review relevant guidance in situations they are not regularly faced with.

Officers are given briefings before operations and will, in many circumstances, be provided with pocket guides to relevant legislation. As an example, in cases of drugs plugging or swallowing, prior to a cell watch, officers receive an oral briefing and written documentation to review to ensure they are up to date with cell watch procedures. They are required to sign the custody record to confirm they are satisfied with their understanding of the guidance and methodology. A video will also shortly be introduced.

It should be noted however, that officers and staff at all ranks have personal responsibility to ensure they are satisfied they understand what is expected of them when faced with irregular situation. They can seek advice and supervision from their direct line managers at Sergeant and Inspector level, peers, tutor constables and though accessing online guidance available on the police computer systems and their hand held devices.

7. Access to and updating of on-line guidance and procedures

In April 2017 TVP established the Governance & Service Improvement department. Headed by a Chief Superintendent, it consists of 4 separate units, Governance, Service Improvement, Policing Strategy and Change. The Policing Strategy Unit (PSU), Headed by a Detective Superintendent is responsible, amongst other things for the development of simple, up to date and easily accessible operational guidance for front line staff. The operational guidance is developed in layers so staff can access the guidance that is relevant to their particular role. This is built in a 'Wikipedia' style so if staff wish to understand more they can click on links to navigate to more detailed explanations of subject matter relevant to the guidance.

When launched, guidance is communicated via a number of means but will include publication via "In the Know" a weekly publication sent to all staff and will feature on the Knowzone, an online application (internal) for all staff to access. Dependent on the type of guidance other communications channels may be used to ensure staff are aware.

To access the guidance it can be accessed via a prominent tab on the front pages of the Knowzone that takes staff to an A-Z list of all operational guidance.

From the outset the unit developed guidance that was either new or approaching a review date. Over the past 2 years it has also been bringing existing guidance into the new simpler to use format.

The drugs recovery SOP was updated into the new format in July 2019. Prior to this and at the time of the death of Mr Medford this was contained in a Standard Operating Procedure which was long and difficult to both access and understand from an operational officers perspective. The new, simpler guidance is far easier to access and simplified down to the responsibilities of officers role. As an example there is a section headed “observing the detainee” which sets out the responsibilities of those conducting a cell watch.

It is accepted that TVP have had challenges to communicate with all front line staff to ensure they are aware of guidance and update themselves on it, especially when they are performing an unfamiliar role. To counter this the Policing Strategy Unit have introduced Special Points of Contact or ‘SPOCs’ from within the team on each Local Police Area so they can build relationships with local staff. This will assist with communications locally when new guidance is produced so staff are aware of its existence and are encouraged to review it.

TVP are also developing ways to ensure simple guidance is available on officer’s mobile phones so they can access it in methods that are aligned with modern technology and societal demand.

### **In summary**

As a large public sector organisation Thames Valley Police take the need to ensure our staff are adequately and appropriately trained very seriously. Thames Valley Police has taken significant learning from the death of Mr Medford and sought to make improvements in a number of areas, to try and ensure a similar death is prevented in the future.

It is clear that cases where detainees are believed to have swallowed or plugged significant quantities of drugs are some of the riskiest in terms of police detentions. Police Custody provides a limited safe environment, but a medical setting would be more appropriate.

Thames Valley Police are committed to responding positively to the narrative verdict from this inquest and ensuring that we provide the best care we possibly can to those detained in our custody suites.