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**STAFFORDSHIRE AND WEST MIDLANDS POLICE
JOINT LEGAL SERVICES**

Director of Legal Services
[REDACTED]

Area Coroner, Birmingham and Solihull
Coroner's Court
50 Newton Street
Birmingham
B4 6NE

Your Ref:

Our Ref: L14002652/JS

Email: jointlegalservices@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk

By email: birmingham.coroner@nhs.net

Date: 8 October, 2019

Dear Sirs,

Re: Regulation 28 report, prevention of future death pertaining to Ms Karen Burns (deceased)

Firstly on behalf of West Midlands Police may I extend our most sincere condolences to the family of Ms Burns following her sad death.

Pursuant to Regulation 29 of the Coroners (Investigation) Regulations 2013 this is the response of the Chief Constable for West Midlands Police to the Coroner's Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths dated 12 August 2019. The Coroner's report and this response arise from the inquest into the death of Karen Jane Burns which was concluded on 12 August 2019.

1. The coroner raises two matters for consideration. First, the 101 call made by the deceased's ex-partner was incorrectly graded as a P3 (response time of 8 hours) and not a P2 (response time of 1 hour).
2. West Midlands Police accepts the call was incorrectly graded. This was a human error. It has been addressed with the staff in question through management action. Further

Please reply to:

Birmingham Office:
Joint Legal Services
West Midlands Police
Lloyd House, Colmore Circus
Birmingham, B4 6NQ
Tel: 0121 626 8317
Fax: 0121 626 8272

Staffordshire Office

Joint Legal Services
Staffordshire Police Headquarters
PO Box 3167
Stafford, ST16 9JZ
Tel: 01785 232259

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training for all control room staff is ongoing to ensure such errors are eliminated as far as possible. It is clear from the Coroner's findings that the wrong grading of this call made no difference to the deceased in this case since even a correctly graded P2 call would not have been responded to due to pressure on resources on the night of 22/23 March 2019.

3. The second and key issue that the Coroner raises is the risk created by the lack of resources available to West Midlands Police. On the night of 22/23 March 2019 most calls graded P2, and even some calls graded P1 (response time of 15 minutes), could not be reached due to the high level of demand and resources available.
4. Within the limits of the resources available to it, it is the aim of West Midlands Police to allocate these in the most efficient and appropriate way to deal with the demand for a huge range of policing activities. West Midlands Police recognises that response to emergency calls from the public within an appropriate time is of vital importance and seeks to ensure appropriate prioritisation based on threat, harm and risk.
5. Before and since the events leading up to Ms Burns' death, West Midlands Police has taken steps to ensure that the response resources it has are allocated as swiftly and efficiently as possible to all emergency calls. These steps include:
 - a. Instituting a process of escalation, whereby dispatchers can escalate calls about which they have particular concerns to a supervisor so resources can be prioritised for that call when possible.
 - b. Instituting a process of involving the Force Incident Manager when response shifts become particularly busy so resources from outside the area can be redeployed to response, where possible. (This process was employed on the night of 22/23 March 2019 and further units were allocated to assist in Birmingham East. These additional units were immediately deployed to P1 incidents requiring assistance and therefore were unavailable for allocation to any P2 incidents.)
 - c. Instituting a "Log Closure Doctrine" to encourage bolder decision-making from dispatchers dealing with emergency calls to ensure resources are focussed on those calls with the most pressing needs.

- d. Reducing the number of logs held by each dispatcher. Logs more than 24 hours old are now dealt with by another team so dispatchers can concentrate only on the most critical calls without the distraction of managing older logs. Numbers of logs held by each dispatcher has decreased from around 160 (as on the night of 22/23 March 2019) to around 60.
 - e. Changing the dispatch model, including where people sit and how they interact, to promote more efficient handling of calls.
 - f. Changing shift patterns to build better relationships between teams and to promote more efficient handling of calls and transfer of calls between shifts.
6. West Midlands Police takes its response to emergency calls extremely seriously. We constantly monitor the level of resources and performance to ensure appropriate resources are available across the full range of demands we face. Learning has been captured from this incident and training has been provided to the call handlers involved. This has also formed part of a review of THRIVE+ training for staff. A new Command and Control platform is being developed to support call handlers and those involved in resource despatch, allowing for improved identification of resource availability and response times.

Monitoring of call response times and resolution has demonstrated that our actions taken a) to e) have improved our ability to respond with the finite resources available.

Yours faithfully



Legal Assistant
Staffordshire and West Midlands Police Joint Legal Services