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

Director of Legal Services
[REDACTED]

VIA EMAIL ONLY

coroner@worcestershire.gov.uk

**Worcestershire Coroner's Court
The Civic, Martins Way
Stourport on Severn
Worcestershire
DY13 8UN**

Your Ref: GUW/TW/28229

Our Ref: L14002682/NB

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

Date: 30 April, 2020

Dear Sir,

**Inquest touching the death of Jason Devoti
Regulation 29 response to a report on action to prevent other deaths**

Please find attached to the end of this letter, the Chief Constable's response to the PFD report from the Coroner.

Firstly I must apologise for the delay in this being sent to you but I am sure you can appreciate with the critical issues that have arisen from COVID-19 it has been difficult to get this finalised.

I hope this response provides some reassurance to the Coroner and the family in this matter that the Chief Constable and West Midlands Police Force have and will continue to take all necessary steps to ensure our procedures and practices are reviewed and are fit for purpose to meet the challenges when dealing with calls in Force Contact. Also that the necessary steps to train and support staff are in place and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

If I can assist further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please reply to:

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Yours faithfully




Principal Lawyer
Staffordshire and West Midlands Police Joint Legal Services

Attached Below: Response to PFD report

Jason DEVOTI- Response to PFD issued by HM Senior Coroner DDW Reid

1. 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 21st January 2020. The coroner's report and this response arises from the inquest into the death of Mr. Jason Devoti which was concluded on 10th January 2020.
2. The coroner raises in principle two key matters for consideration. Firstly the actions taken to reduce the demand pressures placed on control room staff, recognised at the time of Mr. Devoti's death. Secondly the training and support provided to staff to alleviate these demand pressures ensuring that incidents are dealt with effectively.
3. Chief Inspector ██████████ gave evidence at the inquest of Mr Devoti and accepted that at the time of this incident, there were a number of other P2 incidents outstanding. There were in excess of 500 P2 incidents open across West Midlands Police Force and this was reflected on the date of the incident regarding the death of Mr Devoti on 9th October 2018.
4. West Midlands Police supports the evidence presented at the inquest and was explained by ██████████ a Senior Manager within Force Contact. This demonstrated that a year on, in October 2019, the number of outstanding P2 incidents was reduced to an average to 200 open P2 incidents; and at the time of the inquest in January 2020, this was further reduced to approximately 100 open incidents. This position has been maintained since.
5. These reductions have been achieved through changes in systems and processes across the force to better understand and manage demand:
 - a. Escalation process - Whilst this was in place at the time of the death of Mr Devoti, this has been refreshed with all staff and is now subject of regular audits and feedback. The 'rank' involved in this decision making has been reduced to make the decision process quicker and has been explained to the wider organisation.
 - b. Changes to control room model - The model that is used within dispatch is continually reviewed to ensure that it delivers the most effective approach. Changes were implemented in the summer of 2019 in order to manage incoming demand and the risk contained within existing logs. This includes the introduction of a dedicated triage terminal. This terminal does not hold legacy demand, therefore is able to review every new incident log sent to

- dispatch, ensuring the risk is understood, primary actions and checks have been completed and the incident is ready to dispatch officers.
- c. Incident logs are now reviewed at various touch points during the day with increasing supervisory levels and at three review touch points during Threat Risk Meetings (TRM) by managers.
 - d. The new dispatch model reviews unresolved incidents at 24 hours to assess whether the risk still exists or the incident can be managed in a different way, reducing the front end incident management and resourcing pressures. At this point it will be moved out of the dispatch group for resolution. This means that there is a greater ability for dispatchers to concentrate on the risk contained within the incidents still in the dispatch group.
 - e. This has been combined with a focus within Contact handling, around the policing purpose for incidents. Historically there were incidents being created as a P2 that were lower risk and should have been graded as a P3, or where there was no policing response required. This has further reduced unnecessary demand on control rooms.
 - f. In June 2019 a new shift pattern was implemented for control rooms, this was in part due to there being no dedicated training days in the previous pattern and to align with Contact handling colleagues to improve understanding and opportunities for joint training.
6. There is acceptance that there is still work more to do, including the introduction of a new Command and Control System and a performance analysis tool which provides incident and resource demand data at 15 minutes periods in order that this can be easily identified and responded to. This has continued to improve the position demonstrated by the snapshots presented as evidence and described at Point 4 above.
 7. In relation to the Birmingham West (BW) dispatch group specifically, the dispatch group covering the incident involving Mr. DEVOTI, at the time there would be in excess of 150 P2 incidents to be resourced. During the inquest, evidence was presented to show that at the time of the inquest, this had reduced and was currently at 12 outstanding P2 incidents. This reduction had been achieved through the changes described above and continues to be our focus.
 8. It was presented during the inquest that the reason for the number of outstanding incident logs was due to resourcing challenges because of austerity and the availability of officers to deploy. This has been addressed in a number of ways since the incident involving Mr DEVOTI:
 - a. Support of the Force Support Unit to manage legacy demand.
 - b. Use of the closest available resource to support with front end log demand.

- c. Support from Neighbourhood Policing Unit senior leaders to allocate logs unresolved at 96 hours to the most appropriate resource to own until finalised.
 - d. Load sharing across control rooms to match demand with resource. Logs are now transferred to another control room to ensure that demand is equally managed across all staff.
9. Even Keel has proven to be a successful tactic that can be used to manage a sudden increase in demand (i.e. following a critical incident where resources have been committed elsewhere). The tactic can be used to surge resources into demand to bring it back under control.
10. In relation to point 4 of HM Coroners areas of concern, it is accepted that there were some issues with how the 'snapshot' was completed. This has been addressed and as seen during the inquest, this snapshot has been changed to simplify what is being presented and an online dashboard is now in place to support the understanding of resources.
11. Staff across the control rooms continue to be supported in the use of the escalation process. There are a number of processes being implemented to ensure that this is the case:
- a. THRIVE, which is a tool used to gather information to assess risk incorporated with the National Decision Model (NDM), supporting decision making on how an incident should be managed. This is now an agreed policy and the process change training is being developed ready for delivery to teams.
 - b. THRIVE is now embedded into the new Command and Control system and was delivered to all Force Contact staff as part of the training for the system 'go live' .
 - c. Introduction of the new Command and Control system - This is now implemented, having gone live on 2nd March 2020. The functionality of the system allows for the improved management of incidents and risk identification and also improves the management of demand across our control rooms.
12. The role by its very nature is one of managing competing demands, assessing risk and identifying appropriate resources to deploy against this assessment. The initial training is over a six month period involving initial training, mentoring and the completion of a portfolio for competence and capability in being able to operate in this high pressured role. To support staff in delivering against these demands, all of these systems and processes are now in place to support staff appropriately.

13. In relation to the lack of resources to deal with incidents, the introduction of the escalation process allows for the use of any resource to respond to an incident where the risk dictates. It has taken time to embed this process and we are now seeing this supporting delivery. This has become more focussed during Force TRM, held three times a day, where decisions are made to move additional resources according to demand.
14. It is right to reflect the positive news of an uplift to police resources over the next three years, recently announced by the Government and these are welcomed. It is necessary to acknowledge the impacts of austerity through the funding formula over the last five years particularly on West Midlands Police and the challenge this has created in managing increasing demand levels.
15. Within the limits of the resources available, it is the aim of West Midlands Police to allocate funds 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 prioritise this as far as possible.
16. Before and since the events leading up to Mr Devoti' s death, West Midlands Police has taken steps to ensure that the Response resources it has available are allocated as swiftly and efficiently as possible to all emergency calls. In addition to those measures set out above the following steps have also been taken:
 - a. Instituting a process of involving the Force Incident Manager (FIM) when response shifts become particularly busy so resources from outside the area can be redeployed to Response or a different policing area.
 - b. Instituting a "Log Closure Doctrine" to encourage bolder decision-making from dispatchers dealing with emergency calls to ensure resources are focussed on those calls requiring greatest need.
 - c. Reducing the number of logs held by each dispatcher. Logs more than 24 hours old are now dealt with by a different team so that dispatchers can concentrate on the most critical calls without the distraction of managing older logs.
17. West Midlands Police takes its response to emergency calls extremely seriously. We constantly review and strive to implement new processes, systems and technology, maximising the efficiency of the control room. This allows redeployment of available resources to respond at particularly busy times. An

example is the ongoing completion of a record of all missing person logs managed and overseen by supervisors in control rooms until resolved. This maintains the constant awareness including in the handover between teams.

18. West Midlands Police will endeavour to ensure that they manage and maximise those available resources it has designated to them to improve our ability to provide the most efficient and effective service possible to our communities.

Signed

██████████

Dated:

29th April 2020