

## Regulation 28: Prevention of Future Deaths report

Jaden Matthew FRANCOIS-ESPRIT (died 26.08.20)

	<p><b>THIS REPORT IS BEING SENT TO:</b></p> <p>1. [REDACTED] <b>Commissioner London Fire Brigade 169 Union Street London SE1 0LL</b></p>
1	<p><b>CORONER</b></p> <p>I am: Coroner ME Hassell Senior Coroner Inner North London St Pancras Coroner's Court Camley Street London N1C 4PP</p>
2	<p><b>CORONER'S LEGAL POWERS</b></p> <p>I make this report under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, paragraph 7, Schedule 5, and The Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, regulations 28 and 29.</p>
3	<p><b>INVESTIGATION and INQUEST</b></p> <p>On 3 September 2020, I commenced an investigation into the death of Jaden Francois-Esprit, aged 21 years. The investigation concluded at the end of the inquest on 15 February 2021. I made a determination of suicide.</p>
4	<p><b>CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH</b></p> <p>Jaden hanged himself at home on the 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2020. In the last few weeks of his life he became more withdrawn, including at his place of work as a firefighter. He felt isolated, though in reality he had friends there and was well liked, as well as being loved by his family.</p>
5	<p><b>CORONER'S CONCERNS</b></p>

During the course of the inquest, the evidence revealed matters giving rise to concern. In my opinion, there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken. In the circumstances, it is my statutory duty to report to you.

The **MATTERS OF CONCERN** are as follows.

Unbeknown to those with whom he worked at Wembley Fire Station, Jaden's mental well being was deteriorating significantly in the last weeks of his life, and it deteriorated to the point where he killed himself.

I heard at inquest that the London Fire Brigade has quite sophisticated systems in place to support firefighters suffering mental ill health. However, Jaden was not offered the support of, for example, psychological counselling, because it was not appreciated that he was so very low.

Obviously if firefighters are to be given the best chance of recovering from mental ill health, their difficulties first need to be recognised.

I appreciate that it can be difficult to detect that a person may be depressed or exceptionally unhappy. Signs may be subtle and require a nuanced approach.

- Jaden often complained that he was bored because Wembley Green Watch had not been called to many incidents. I heard evidence that boredom in a new firefighter can be quite common. However, I also heard that a complaint of boredom can be a sign of a person with dyslexia avoiding an unpalatable or daunting task.
- Jaden had dyslexia and was worried that he would not be able to complete his written work in order to become a fully qualified firefighter, yet the reality was that his station officer was fully aware of his difficulties and had tried to reassure Jaden that he was certainly capable of achieving his goal.
- He did need extra time, the space to make mistakes and a degree of sensitivity that was not always afforded him. On the other hand, he asked for help and was given a mentor, but did not make use of him and so eventually the mentorship ceased. That request for help followed by a refusal of help was not explored. Such an exploration might have led to a greater understanding of how Jaden could be helped.
- Jaden felt he was being treated unfairly at work and his family have formed the view that there was an element of racism there, driven in part by their belief that Jaden was the only non white person on Wembley Green Watch. Yet the reality was that he joined a watch where a quarter of the firefighters were people of colour.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He described being teased about bringing chicken, rice and peas to work to eat, thinking that this teasing was because the food was Caribbean. Looking at this from the outside, chicken, rice and peas seems a dish without obvious world origin. Moreover, I heard about a huge variety of food being brought to work by firefighters, with some even weighing their food before eating. None of this sits easily with a dish of chicken, rice and peas resulting in a racist comment.</li> </ul> <p>Jaden’s interior life did not always accord with what was going on around him. Most of all he felt isolated, and yet it was clear to me that he there was a lot of affection for him at the fire station. He did not always feel comfortable there. It is not necessarily an easy task to unearth such feelings in a colleague but, if it results in such a tragedy as this being avoided, it is a worthwhile one.</p> <p>I should be grateful if you, or whoever you delegate to investigate this matter, would listen to the entirety of the recording of this inquest. The London Fire Brigade investigation report already produced, talks in some detail about the station culture. There were so many different aspects to the evidence that, without listening to the whole inquest, I am afraid that any understanding will not be as meaningful as it could be.</p>
6	<p><b>ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN</b></p> <p>In my opinion, action should be taken to prevent future deaths and I believe that you have the power to take such action.</p>
7	<p><b>YOUR RESPONSE</b></p> <p>You are under a duty to respond to this report within 56 days of the date of this report, namely by 19 April 2021. I, the coroner, may extend the period.</p> <p>Your response must contain details of action taken or proposed to be taken, setting out the timetable for action. Otherwise you must explain why no action is proposed.</p>
8	<p><b>COPIES and PUBLICATION</b></p> <p>I have sent a copy of my report to the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [REDACTED], Jaden’s mum</li> <li>• HHJ Thomas Teague QC, the Chief Coroner of England &amp; Wales</li> </ul> <p>I am also under a duty to send a copy of your response to the Chief Coroner and all interested persons who in my opinion should receive it.</p>

	<p>I may also send a copy of your response to any other person who I believe may find it useful or of interest.</p> <p>The Chief Coroner may publish either or both in a complete or redacted or summary form. He may send a copy of this report to any person who he believes may find it useful or of interest. You may make representations to me, the coroner, at the time of your response, about the release or the publication of your response.</p>				
9	<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><b>DATE</b></td> <td style="width: 50%;"><b>SIGNED BY SENIOR CORONER</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>22.02.21</td> <td><i>ME Hassell</i></td> </tr> </table>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>SIGNED BY SENIOR CORONER</b>	22.02.21	<i>ME Hassell</i>
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