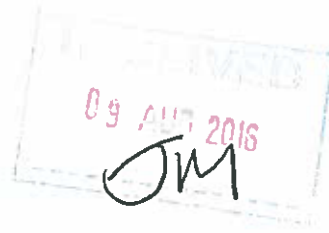


Ian Hopkins QPM., MBA
Chief Constable

GREATER MANCHESTER
POLICE



Ms Joanne Kearsley
Senior Coroner
The Coroners Court
1 Mount Tabor
Stockport
SK1 3AG



04 August 2016

Dear Ms Kearsley

Re: Christopher Philip Fields (deceased)

With regards to the report sent by letter from HMC Mr Pollard dated 18 May 2016 in respect of Christopher Philip Fields pursuant to Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 and paragraph 7, Schedule 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. I apologise for the delay in responding as this correspondence was not received into my office until 16 June 2016. I reply to the matters you have asked me to consider as follows;

Extract from Regulation 28, point 1. The police were called to the address after the first assault had occurred and were still in attendance when the assailant re-entered the premises via the broken window, which he had smashed out of its frame when entering the first time. Despite this rather bizarre set of occurrences, the police then decided to leave the deceased before the ambulance service arrived. Sometime later, the assailant re-entered the flat and beat the deceased to his death.

Various issues arise as a result of the police actions, being why did they leave a vulnerable person in this manner why did they not await the arrival of the ambulance, why did they not take the witness (female) who was there at the time to a place where she could give them details out of the earshot of the assailant etc. Why did they leave an injured and/or intoxicated person in the sole care of another who was also intoxicated, why did they consider it appropriate to accept the view of the injured / intoxicated person as to whether it was safe to leave him in the situation in which he was found?

Are there issues of training for all GMP officers or did the officers fail to adhere to the approved guidance?

No policy or guidance exists that formalises how long officers should wait in such cases and it would be impractical to set down specific timescales for officers to adhere to. Officers are given guidance in the use of the National Decision Making Model ('NDMM'). The NDMM allows officers to make decisions based on the following principles:

- Gather information and intelligence
- Assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy
- Consider powers and policy
- Identify options and contingencies
- Take action and review what happened

Both [REDACTED] gave evidence at the Inquest, and provided their rationale with reference to the National Decision Making Model (NDMM). They assessed that Mr Fields did not lack capacity to make decisions, was talking calmly and coherently and making his own choices. Mr Fields wanted the police officers to leave and had (who officers believed were his friends) with him. He was not giving the officers any information which would allow them to

progress their investigation. Mr Fields had the telephone number for Stockport Homes and was capable of speaking to them to speed up the joiner if necessary. A crime report was recorded at the time in line with national crime recording standards and the officers carried out a primary investigation. The officers had assessed that although Mr Fields had minor visible injuries they were not serious or life threatening, however they did feel that he still needed to be assessed by a medical professional and an ambulance was still required. Following all of this, [REDACTED] judged that there was no policing purpose to justify remaining at the scene.

The officers were interviewed by the [REDACTED] said that she believed that the risk to Mr Fields would be minimised if he had friends with him, and "if I had any indication at all that [REDACTED] were a threat to Christopher I would have stayed with him". The officers stated that they were influenced by Mr Fields stating that he was "fine" in the presence of the two persons. The IPCC investigator's opinion was that both [REDACTED] made appropriate dynamic assessments about the extent to which Mr Fields had any welfare needs and required safeguarding, based on his injuries, his ability to meet his own needs and his behaviour whilst in the company of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The officers also based their assessment on Mr Field's limited response to their questions and him wanting the officers to leave the flat.

[REDACTED] was spoken to by the officers as a potential witness and had given conflicting accounts. She initially denied any knowledge of the incident. [REDACTED] had confronted her with information that a female had been seen running away, and she told the officer that she had called for the ambulance, but did not know who was responsible. Mr Fields as the victim, was taken to one side away from the two persons present in the address and spoken to privately, being asked what had occurred, who was involved and if he wanted the other two people removing. Mr Fields told the officers that they could remain as they were all friends.

The crime and incident recording procedure states that the investigation should be victim focused. Appendix D of the Incident Response policy states that the victim's needs and the investigation must be at the forefront of all decisions.

A check on previous incidents at the address would not have assisted with any decision to arrest, as there was a long history of alcohol related incidents involving Mr Fields and other persons.

The IPCC noted that neither officer challenged [REDACTED] account or actions; she said she was asleep at the flat at the time of the assault but Mr Fields was adamant no women had been at his flat. They also state that the officers missed the opportunity to ask [REDACTED] if [REDACTED] was actually [REDACTED] to at least establish his identity in light of the information from the house to house witness. However, the officers checked [REDACTED] for signs of injury or bloodstains on his clothing and found none, to which HMC acknowledged this as "the officers took the precaution of checking the knuckles of [REDACTED] and satisfied themselves that there was no evidence of injury such as might be expected from someone who had recently been involved in a fight". [REDACTED] asked the male who presented as [REDACTED] if he might in fact be [REDACTED] which was denied. Moreover, the police were told repeatedly by Mr Fields that [REDACTED] was not the person who had assaulted him, and that he was his friend.

Both officers gave clear, unambiguous evidence that they did not consider [REDACTED] to have been the perpetrator, and in such circumstances there would be no grounds for an arrest. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, requires for a lawful arrest when there are reasonable grounds for suspecting a person's involvement or attempted involvement in the commission of a criminal

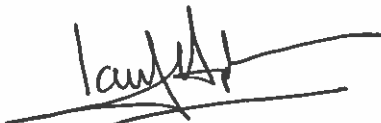
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offence and reasonable grounds for believing that the person's arrest is necessary. On the information available to the officers at the time, there was insufficient evidence of involvement in a criminal offence by any of those present at the scene. This was also accepted by HMC, summing up "I find that there was insufficient evidence upon which the officers could reasonably be expected to have arrested the man [REDACTED]"

In relation to the learning that has arisen out of this case, [REDACTED] was given management action for the lack of documentation within his pocket note book. Errors in recording inaccurate information was addressed in the witness evidence of [REDACTED] Operational Communications Branch Business Lead at Inquest.

It is proposed that we will be able to report back to the Coroners. In October 2016 in terms of the wider work we are completing around vulnerability, including the lessons learnt from this case.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Hopkins', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Ian Hopkins
Chief Constable