

16 DEC 2019

Mr Peter Sigee
Assistant Coroner
Office of Her Majesty's Coroner
West Annexe
Town Hall
Sankey Street
Warrington
WA1 1UH

12th December 2019

Dear Mr Sigee

The late Sam Spooner

Thank you for sending a copy of your Regulation 28 following the death of Sam Spooner. I was very saddened to read of the circumstances of Mr Spooner's death.

I wanted to contact you to outline some of the barriers our counsellors face in relation to information-sharing when they are in private practice and outside of any statutory system. My sincere apologies if you are aware of these difficulties already.

Counsellors and psychotherapists working in private settings are, in providing therapeutic services, working on the basis of a voluntary contract between the client and themselves. The relationship does not sit within the NHS or statutory framework and is very much a private arrangement between the client and practitioner. The practitioner relies very much on the disclosure made by the client as they have no right to access or store medical records. In relation to contracting, most contracts guarantee confidentiality other than in the event of risk of harm to self or others (with additional considerations around specific legal requirements, such as those relating to anti-terror legislation, for example). This puts a very heavy weight of responsibility on the practitioner in relation to the client's wellbeing. In this case, the counsellor did contact the family and GP, but I note that this and other actions undertaken by healthcare providers was not sufficient to avoid the death of Mr Spooner.

The British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy has published a range of guidance for its members in working with suicidal clients and managing the risk of suicide. These are available for our members to download from our website. I will pass your report onto our Professional Standards Department for consideration and review as to whether it might be possible to strengthen any current guidance in light of these distressing events.

Yours sincerely



**Chief Executive Officer
BACP**