



Chief Constable [REDACTED]

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10 March 2021

Dear Mr Middleton

**INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF CHERALYN CLULOW: REPORT UNDER REGULATION 28 OF THE CORONERS (INVESTIGATIONS) REGULATIONS 2013**

I am writing in relation to the above inquest, and in the particular the above-mentioned report of 12 January 2021 ("the Regulation 28 report") that I have received from yourself. I apologise sincerely for the delay in responding and for missing the proposed deadline of 9 March 2021.

Firstly, I want to take this opportunity to express my condolences to the family and friends of Cheralyn, as well to anyone else who may be affected by her loss.

Secondly, I thank you for forwarding me a copy of the Regulation 28 report that was made in the inquest into Cheralyn's death. I always welcome opportunities to consider whether there is potential for Dorset Police to improve the service that they provide to the public.

I have now had the opportunity to consider the issues that you have raised within the Regulation 28 report. Please therefore treat this correspondence as my formal response to the same.

In the Regulation 28 report, you make reference to fire drop keys and key fobs. On the basis of the enquiries that have taken place on my behalf in response to the report, it is my understanding that there is no significant distinction between the two in the context of your concerns, in that both have the same effect of allowing access through communal entry points in shared accommodation. Therefore, within this correspondence, for brevity I will use the phrase 'key and fobs' on the basis that the phrase is intended to represent fire drop keys, key fobs, and any other such items that have the effect of facilitating access to buildings via communal entry points.

Having reflected on the Regulation 28 report, it is my view that allowing Dorset Police officers to have greater access to keys and fobs would mitigate against the issues and risks that you have raised to a significant degree. At my request, the position in respect of the provision and use of keys and fobs has been researched, and it appears to be the case that equipping frontline police officers with such items is a realistic option in that they can be readily obtained and they require little training.

Accordingly, the decision has been made that all frontline Dorset Police officers will now carry keys and fobs when on duty. It is my view that this will serve to avoid delays in sourcing such items and allow for quick access to relevant properties in emergency situations. The process of procuring these items is already underway and I understand that they can be issued to frontline officers quickly (and, I believe, within a month).

I want to be clear that this process will primarily only be implemented in relation to communal buildings under the local authority's control. This is because these buildings generally have a universal and standardised approach to the use of keys and fobs, so between this and our existing working relationships with the local authorities, it is straightforward for us to obtain and provide access to the relevant keys and fobs for our frontline officers.

Our enquiries have led us to conclude that the sheer variety of such items used in privately-owned properties would mean that it is difficult (to the point of being unrealistic) to source every such item. In simple terms, I understand that there is no such item as a 'skeleton key' in this context. In this respect, it is of note that, as I understand it, the fire service do not carry or have access to such items on a similar basis, and will instead force entry to such addresses when required.

To compensate for this, we are in the process of identifying specific vulnerable individuals who live in similar but privately-owned communal premises, with a view to obtaining the relevant keys and fobs to facilitate access to those specific properties where required. Due to the volume of such items, where privately-owned premises are concerned we will store the relevant keys and fobs in a police station local to the address in question, and link instructions for obtaining the relevant item to the record that we hold for the vulnerable individual in question on our police incident management system.

It may reassure you if I point out that none of the above precludes use of enforcement equipment by frontline officers to enter premises where appropriate and lawful to do so.

It is my understanding that the keys and fobs are extremely simple to use; essentially, they function as a key. Accordingly, no training should be required. I can however confirm that a reminder on police powers of entry will be circulated to all frontline officers in due course, including on the organisation's intranet. This will be used as an opportunity to remind frontline police officers of powers available to the police in terms of forcing entry to properties in situations such as that encountered by the colleagues who attended Cheralyn's address prior to her death.

In summary, Dorset Police officers are soon to be issued with keys and fobs to allow for quick or emergency access to communal properties, with a system to be put in

place to compensate for properties where this is not realistically achievable. This will be used as an opportunity to refresh the officers in question in respect of their powers of entry.

I hope that this demonstrates that we have taken your concerns seriously. I am again grateful for you bringing these issues to our attention, particularly as it has provided us with an opportunity to reflect on and identify an opportunity for Dorset Police to further enhance the service that we provide to the public.

Yours sincerely



**Chief Constable**