



[REDACTED]  
Chief Constable

Veronica Hamilton-Deeley, DL.LL.B.  
Her Majesty's Senior Coroner for the City of Brighton & Hove  
The Coroner's Office  
Woodvale,  
Lewes Road  
Brighton  
BN2 3QB

27 July 2021

Dear Veronica,

Ref: [REDACTED]

I write in response to the Regulation 28 Preventing Future Deaths report dated 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021 that was issued following the inquest into the death of David Ormesher in August 2017. I note that the report has also been sent to my colleague [REDACTED] at the NPCC in his capacity as National Police driver training lead.

I have considered the position of Sussex Police and our procedures in response to the recommendations that you have made. In doing so I have consulted our Driver Training Department, our driving standards manager [REDACTED] (who gave evidence at the Inquest) and our Learning & Professional Development department, all of whom have a responsibility to deliver the most accurate and up to date driver training to our officers and staff on my behalf to equip them to drive safely and effectively in a policing context.

Sussex Police is committed to providing the safest possible response to all incidents requiring Police attendance and will where appropriate review and amend our training & procedures as necessary.

In response to the four recommendations:

**Recommendation 1 - The in-car radio should be switched on at all times.**

The in-car radio (as with the personal hand-held radio issued to officers) is part of the 'Airwave' mobile communications network which is used throughout the UK by all emergency services. Having reviewed our policies and procedures governing their use I am satisfied that Sussex Police policy 594/2021 gives a sufficiently robust direction to all Airwave users to ensure that both their personal handsets and vehicle sets are switched on and operational at all times;

*'All on duty staff using police vehicles will ensure that the Airwave terminal is turned on at all times unless leaving the vehicle unattended.'*

In this particular case it would appear that this policy was not followed by the occupants of the police vehicle which, as the jury found, sadly contributed to Mr Ormesher's death.

I have instructed [REDACTED] in conjunction with our Learning & Professional Development team to design a bespoke training package relating to the use of the vehicle radio. This will be mandated to all members of Sussex Police officers and staff who hold a driving permit to complete. It will include the operation of the radio, a reminder of the Sussex Police policy and roles and responsibilities of any passenger within the vehicle. This is already in the later stages of development and rollout should be completed by the end of October 2021.

I have also instructed our Learning & Professional Development team to include a mandated input on vehicle radio use and procedure to all new starters as part of their foundation training with Sussex Police. This is now included in the mandated teaching in all Dedicated Coaching Units, which will be supported by an NCALT package that is in the process of being created.

#### **Recommendations 2 & 4 - The sirens should have been deployed & that the speed was excessive**

The jury found that [REDACTED] speed at the location was too high and that he should have had his sirens activated.

Having reviewed the training that is delivered to response drivers by Sussex Police I am satisfied that we are delivering training that is commensurate with direction given by the College of Policing and the NPCC Driver Training lead.

Response drivers are taught to risk assess every situation and drive accordingly in line with the risks and hazards that are presented to them. This includes the use of all their emergency equipment. In line with national guidance, it is for the driver to justify the use (or lack thereof) of any blue lights and sirens and also their speed throughout.

The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice for Police Drivers states;

*"Even where a statutory exemption exists, an officer must always give due regard to their driving manner and behaviour which should not put other road users or members of the public at a risk which cannot be justified."*

This is reinforced by Sussex Police Policy 616/2020 which states;

*"There is a public expectation on the police to respond promptly to calls for assistance. Police officers must do so as safely as possible and never allow the apparent urgency of such a call to put the public, their colleagues or themselves at unnecessary risk because of their manner of driving. Safety is paramount and cannot be compromised."*

*Police drivers should always drive having regard to their training, the limitations of their vehicle, the prevailing circumstances and within the constraints of the restrictions imposed by their category of driving permit and groups authorised."*

I am satisfied that in this particular case the officer was taught in line with national and Sussex Police standards. [REDACTED] was found both at inquest but also at a Misconduct Hearing, chaired by an independent, Legally Qualified Chair, to have been driving inappropriately and was found to have breached the standards of professional behaviour in relation to "Orders and Instructions" and "Duties and Responsibilities."

[REDACTED] has been found guilty of misconduct against these standards.

This was a tragic case that was found to be caused by a combination of factors, including the driving of [REDACTED]. I do not believe that these failings are systemic in Sussex Police and nor are they as a result of our driver training.

Whilst I shall not be recommending any fundamental changes to our driver training, we are in close contact with the national lead on Driver Training and will ensure that Sussex Police adopts any relevant good practise.

I have also instructed [REDACTED] to reinforce to all police drivers, the need to drive appropriately, justify their actions and plan their journey using all available information. As well as highlight that under the code of ethics, it is a passengers' duty to report any dangerous driving they witness that may put themselves or the public at risk. This will take the form of force wide messaging to all relevant officers in the force. Sussex Police has invested in Telematics, a vehicle management system which provides information about vehicles so the force can monitor how vehicles are being driven and track vehicle movements. A Driver Behaviour Working Group is also in place which reviews trends shown by Telematics, driver training, police vehicle incidents, pursuit learning and health and safety. A Police Vehicle Incidents meeting oversees new policy, reviews vehicle incidents and share lessons learnt. The panel also reviews behaviour of drivers and moderate this through a full range of sanctions or learning outcomes. A point system has been introduced with the aim of making interventions at lower levels and avoiding more serious incidences occurring in future.

**Recommendation 3 – The personal radio should not be handed to the passenger in the police vehicle and not returned immediately.**

The use of the handheld radio is for the officer in possession of it to ensure its security at all times. In this case, [REDACTED] failed to return the radio to [REDACTED]. This was an incredibly rare failing between these particular two officers; I do not believe that our policies or procedures are able to cover such eventualities.

Notwithstanding this, Sussex Police do have the opportunity to raise awareness of this matter. The aforementioned training package that is in development will not only contain training pertaining to the vehicle radio set but will also contain a timely reminder to all staff as to their responsibilities concerning their personal radios and their duty as a passenger in a police vehicle to ensure that all information is passed appropriately to the driver to ensure that they can amend their driving plan appropriately.

Sussex Police absolutely recognise that this was a tragic case in which a man lost his life and his family lost a cherished member. Lessons can always be learnt, both by the officers involved, by the force and by national policing.

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Sussex Police

