

Anna Loxton
HM Assistant Coroner for Surrey
Hon Secretary Coroners' Society of England & Wales
HM Coroner's Court
Station Approach
Woking
GU22 7AP



By email only: [REDACTED]

Date: 22nd September 2022

Dear Ms Loxton,

Regulation 28 Report – Mr Christopher Dominic Boughton

I write on behalf of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) in relation to paragraph 7, Schedule 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, in relation to the prevention of future deaths report sent via email to the NPCC dated 29th July 2022.

The notice sets out concerns that arose from the information received during the inquest into the death of Mr Boughton which occurred in November 2021. I am very sorry to read of the circumstances of Christopher's death. My sympathies are with his family and friends, and I share your commitment to addressing the issues you have highlighted.

The notice sets out your principal concern in relation to cross border investigations stating that the lack of any detailed requirement for telephone discussion between appropriate police officers on sending through written tasking requests and considering transfers of investigations means that an opportunity to discuss and ensure smooth transition and passing on of relevant information is lost. This may cause delay in effective action being taken by the tasked Force, or (in the case of transfers) by the force to whom it is considered a transfer will be made.

The Authorised Professional Practice (APP) which is the official source of professional practice for policing states the following in relation to cross-border cases:

Cross-border cases

Difficulties can arise when a person reported missing resides outside the area where the report is being made, for example, a student in temporary accommodation or a day trip visitor. The police area that receives the report must record it and carry out all necessary initial actions. If the responsibility for a case is subsequently transferred to another force area, the rationale for doing so must be recorded. Written acknowledgement from the receiving force should be obtained.

When deciding where ownership of the investigation lies, the principal issue is to consider where the majority of the enquiries are and who has the greatest opportunity of locating the missing person. It is probable that the place where the person was last seen would generate the majority of the initial enquiries (although this is not always the case, see also Out-of-area placements).



Cross-border enquiries

In cross-border tasking and requests, details of the result of the risk assessment carried out by the investigating force, and other contextual information, should be passed to forces likely to become involved in the enquiry. This transfer of information allows colleagues to decide on the focus of their enquiries.

There is a responsibility on communications staff and investigating officers to request this information. The officer in charge of the investigation in the initiating force should ensure that all relevant information, including the risk assessment, is passed to the force that will be managing subsequent enquiries. It is important that there is a seamless transfer of responsibility for the investigation so that no cases are missed. The officer making the transfer should check that all materials have been received in the receiving force and that details of the person who received the information are noted. Developing a process that includes providing this additional information will reduce the risk to all involved. All police forces should have email addresses that are available 24 hours a day so that investigation records can be shared and transferred where relevant.

Further to the APP guidance a Task and Finishing Group has been initiated focusing on the very issue you have outlined. Draft NPCC advice on 'Requesting Missing Person Enquiries in Another Force and Transfers of Investigations' has been developed and has now been circulated for comment prior to finalisation and wider circulation.

I hope that the information that has been provided goes some way to reassure you that the matters of concern you have raised have been addressed and will be subject to continual review.

For any further information please contact my Staff Officer [REDACTED] who will be happy to address any concerns and answer any questions.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
Chair, National Police Chiefs' Council