

Dr Sean Cummings
Assistant Coroner
Bedfordshire & Luton Coroner Service
The Court House
Woburn Street
Amphill
MK45 2HX

Sent via email

31 January 2023

Dear Dr Cummings,

Re: Regulation 28: Report to prevent future deaths

I was saddened to read of the death of Police Sergeant Sean Duignan in such regrettable circumstances. Mr Duignan's untimely death will undoubtedly have had a dreadful impact on his family, friends and colleagues. HMICFRS's purpose is to promote improvements in policing and fire and rescue services to make everyone safer. I am grateful for the opportunity to comment and contribute to efforts that seek to prevent future such tragedy.

In preparing my response I made a number of enquiries. I was encouraged to learn from others that the following action has already been taken following Mr Duignan's death:

- In July 2021, the College of Policing armed policing lead and deputy conducted a review of the armoury procedures at Bedfordshire Police, focusing on Luton Airport. Observations were made to the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police.
- The Independent Office for Police Conduct has carried out an investigation.
- In October 2022, armed policing chief firearms instructors were presented with the lessons learned at the national chief firearms instructor seminar, which was overseen by the College of Policing.
- In November 2022, temporary Deputy Chief Constable [REDACTED] wrote to Chief Constable [REDACTED] (National Police Chiefs' Council armed policing lead) to advise him of the inquest finding and the work undertaken by Bedfordshire to address Independent Office for Police Conduct recommendations and College of Policing observations.

Coincidentally, under the leadership of my colleague, His Majesty's Inspector [REDACTED], HMICFRS has very recently completed the fieldwork phase of a national thematic inspection of armed policing. The terms of reference for that inspection include elements of munitions and weapons storage and issue. We did not specifically test armoury access. The inspection visited nine forces; Bedfordshire wasn't one of these.

The inspection methodology included a review of those nine forces' armoury standard operating procedures. All use the system known as 'Chronicle' to manage access. While single access is possible, dual access is the norm. Only a small number of documented and authorised individuals (for example, armourer, chief firearms instructor) have single access. Manual override processes involve the force incident manager.

The Armed Policing inspection report is due to be published in summer 2023 and will refer to our findings and recommendations, including in respect of force armouries.

Further to the inspection work, I intend to take the following action:

- Make sure the College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council armed policing lead issue a relevant national circular to all forces by 31 March 2023. That circular should include the lessons learned and ask for a suitable auditable review of all force armoury access procedures. I understand both organisations intend to take such action following the inquest conclusion.
- Instruct my team to monitor Bedfordshire Police's armoury processes as part of the HMICFRS police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy inspection programme 2023–25.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services

Cc: His Majesty's Inspector [REDACTED] HMICFRS
Chief Constable [REDACTED], NPCC Armed Policing Lead
Chief Constable [REDACTED], Bedfordshire Police