

**Legal Department**

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Mr Andrew Cox
HM Senior Coroner for Cornwall
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The New Lodge
Penmount
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Joint Legal Services
Devon & Cornwall Police
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27 June 2023

Dear Mr Cox

INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF TAMSIN ANN DOLAMORE

I am writing in relation to the above inquest and, specifically, the Regulation 28 report to prevent future deaths that you have directed to the Chief Constable following the conclusion of the inquest hearing.

I want to take this opportunity to both express my personal condolences and reiterate those previously offered at the inquest on behalf of Devon and Cornwall Police, to Tamsin's friends and family for their loss.

I am grateful to you generally for bringing the matters of concern raised in the Regulation 28 report to my attention. I welcome the opportunity to reassure you that we have very carefully considered what we can learn from Tamsin's death with a view to improve the service that we provide to the public. If you have any queries or concerns arising out of this response, then I would welcome discussing these with you.

NOTE: With effect from 1 January 2019, fax communication will not be possible. Documents can either be sent via hard copy post or via email to legalservices@devonandcornwall.pnn.police.uk
SB / 009334 / 01693711

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<https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/your-right-to-information/data-protection-requests/privacy-noticefair-processing/>
<http://www.dorset.police.uk/default.aspx?page=3882>

I will use the remainder of this correspondence to respond to the matters of concern set out in the fifth box of the Regulation 28 report.

Cornwall and The Isles of Scilly ('CIOS') Criminal Investigation Department ('CID') senior managers conducted a 5-day review in January 2023 of all open rape investigations being investigated by CIOS CID. Reviews of this size are not regularly conducted due to the resources they require, however it was a very useful exercise to understand the demands on our teams, areas we could seek improvement, to finalise any that needed an Inspector review as per policy and to reassure ourselves that the volume of crime being investigated was accurate. We identified 560 active rape investigations within CIOS, with 511 rapes under investigation by CIOS CID. Other rapes came under the Public Protection Unit. This is slightly under the 600 quoted but still significant numbers. This number does not include serious sexual assault.

This figure has improved slightly since CIOS CID have been allocated 76 Detective Constables ('DC') to deal with general CID crime types. Rape and other serious sexual offences are two types of the many other serious and complex crimes that we deal with. It has been suggested that RASSO offences account for around 35% to 40% of a Detectives workload. Clearly having vacancies impacts on the average amount of investigations that each investigator will have. Investigators workloads are at levels that have not been seen before and that is a combination of the rising demand from our communities and the vacancies. This high demand also reflects that our communities feel confident to report this type of crime. The vacancies are reducing, however and that is mainly by recruiting Police Officers at the early stages of their careers. To become a DC takes time and I would hope that within the next 12 – 18 months, as the new Detectives become experienced and qualified then it will reduce our vacancies and improve our staffing shortfalls. Attracting applications to become a DC has been a national issue for several years and Devon and Cornwall Police are not alone in this shortage.

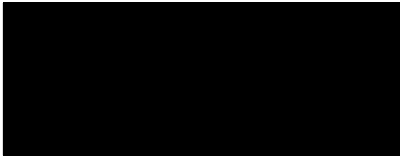
Cornwall currently has 9 sexual offences liaison officers (SOLO) who perform the majority of the specialist video interview role (ABE). DC's can also complete ABE interviews however they generally rely upon the SOLO for this support. It would be a fair assumption that if there were no DC vacancies then we may be able to use the additional capacity to assist with the ABE backlog. There are no SOLO vacancies, however we are currently preparing a business case to consider an uplift of SOLOs as we are aware of the good practice findings of the national Op Soteria Bluestone project which evidences the value of obtaining early victim accounts by correctly trained staff. The delay in obtaining an ABE account can be due to a number of factors, some of which are outside Police control. Whilst we are not as efficient in obtaining these accounts as we would want to be it is something we are aware of and seek to improve our timeliness in the year ahead.

I agree that staff numbers are a factor on our ability to process the work, but our staff provide the best service they can with many competing demands, and it was not a factor in this tragic death. Clearly, I would want us to be fully staffed as that would reduce average workloads and as explained there is ongoing recruitment but that will take time to see the improvement. We have many examples of good work within the teams, and we continue to prosecute RASSO offences in the courts with our CPS colleagues.

The Chief Constable has also just agreed to launch Project Synergy which is an initiative to improve our investigative operating model, increase the resilience and wellbeing of our investigative teams and to improve investigative quality. We are currently in the process of recruiting a Detective Chief Superintendent to lead on this project across Devon and Cornwall. Its considerations include formation of investigative hubs whereby investigators will be brought together to increase resilience, enable more specialist officers to be established (including rape investigators) and to introduce investigation support officers to boost the available resource. We are hopeful that this new initiative will increase our capability to deal with the increasing investigative demand.

I hope that this provides you with some reassurance that, while there are staff shortages, we are working hard to do what we can to alleviate the associated demands.

Yours sincerely

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Assistant Chief Constable 