



Ms Rachael Griffin
HM Senior Coroner for the County of Dorset
Civic Centre
Bourne Avenue
Bournemouth
BH2 6DY

Trust Headquarters
Abbey Court
Eagle Way
Exeter
Devon
EX2 7HY

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[Redacted]

10 August 2023

Dear Ms Griffin

Inquest touching the death of Ivan Rumenov Ignatov
Response to Report to Prevent Future Deaths issued on 8 June 2023

I write on behalf of South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) to respond to the Report to Prevent Future Deaths which you issued on 8 June 2023.

SWASFT was not an Interested Person at the Inquest and therefore had no information about the concerns which HM Senior Coroner has raised in the Report prior to receiving it. SWASFT has been advised by HM Senior Coroner that, as it was not an Interested Person, a copy of the inquest bundle cannot be provided. We are therefore able to respond to the issues set out in the Report only to the extent that the Report itself provides relevant information.

With section 5 of the Report, paragraph 1(vi) states:

A number of emergency services and search and rescue services were involved in the events on the 19th July after Ian had tried to take the motor vehicle. These were Dorset Police, National Police Air Service (NPAS) His Majesty's Coastguard (HMCG) & the RNLI. The police radio was accessible by Dorset Police and NPAS as a channel of communication and HMCG and RNLI are able to communicate via VHF radio but there is no direct communication between all services, for example for NPAS and HMCG to directly communicate, they go via the police command centre. This can lead to a misunderstanding of what is going on, on the ground. In this case it was the belief of the NPAS Tactical Flight Operator (TFO), who was aware that there was a risk to Ivan's life from about 22.15 hours, and also the Force Incident Manager (FIM) in the police command centre, that a lifeboat had been launched, when in fact it had not. They therefore believed one was on route when it was not. If they had been aware that it was not on route this would have allowed for further communications or direct

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requests to be made between agencies, and other actions being taken. I was told in the evidence that there is work ongoing around an emergency services channel for communications, but this would not include search and rescue agencies and I have been told this is taking a considerable period of time to develop.

There appears to be from the evidence a lack of understanding between emergency services and search and rescue teams about the work each other undertakes, the language and terms they use, and the tasks they undertake.

Paragraph 2(iv) states:

There is a lack of knowledge and/or understanding amongst emergency services and search and rescue services, especially around terminology, process and communication for them to be ensure [sic] they can work together when an incident arises without confusion or misunderstanding arising. I would request that consideration is given to further national and local training or guidance across emergency and search and rescue services to ensure communication can be facilitated without delay, and ensure terms and processes are understood to avoid any doubt of what action is being taken when an incident is ongoing.

We note that the remaining concerns within the Report do not appear to relate to ambulance services. We are also not aware of any specific concerns of HM Senior Coroner regarding communication issues between SWASFT and other agencies in relation to the incident involving Mr Ignatov. Therefore this response is limited to addressing the concern identified above at a general level.

Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)¹

JESIP aims to improve the ways in which police, fire and ambulance services (as a minimum) work together at major and complex incidents. It is an ongoing arrangement but has been strengthened over the last couple of years.

The JESIP Joint Doctrine (edition 3 published in October 2021) sets out principles for joint working between the different services, which SWASFT ensures are implemented through training and its own policies and standard operating procedures. Those principles include communicating using language which is clear, and free from technical jargon and abbreviations.

In respect of training, all SWASFT commanders must participate in a combined JESIP one-day facilitated course for commanders, control room managers and supervisors every three years. All commanders, and all front-line and control room staff, must participate in online training annually. This training supports multiagency working at the scene of an incident and within our control rooms.

Work is also underway at present to set up Regional Head of Emergency Services meetings to include police, fire and coastguard.

1. www.jesip.org.uk



Joint working with HM Coastguard and the RNLi

Invitations to attend JESIP courses are extended to colleagues from HM Coastguard. In addition, SWASFT is currently strengthening relationships by participating in a programme of visits by SWASFT and HM Coastguard commanders and other key role holders to other control rooms. This aims to further promoting shared understanding between SWASFT and HM Coastguard commanders of how each emergency service co-ordinates its response to incidents, and the terminology used by each service. During such a visit the visiting commander shadows the resident control commander, observing processes in operation and listening to communications with officers on-scene.

We are also ensuring effective aide memoirs are in place for our dispatchers and commanders within our control room to support effective joint working with the HM Coastguard. This work has begun over the last few months and will be finalised during the forthcoming couple of months. The aim is to ensure that business-as-usual working between SWASFT and HM Coastguard is well embedded with key relationships formed, making sure that when the larger incidents happen we already have a strong working relationship.

Notifications of incidents to other services

A standard operating procedure is in place to guide the Emergency Medical Dispatchers in our Emergency Operations Centres (the EOCs – our control rooms in Bristol and Exeter) regarding receiving emergency calls from other emergency services, and when to notify the police, fire service, coastguard or utility providers of an incident to which an ambulance has been called. Outgoing calls to other services are made to dedicated blue light service lines into their control rooms in most cases.

In 2019 multiagencies implemented a 3 way call process which can be instigated in the event of a Major Incident, to enable SWASFT and the police and fire services to directly communicate through control rooms. This process enables control rooms to effectively communicate on an open call (or via MSTEAMS in some areas) prior to the arrival of resources at the scene of an incident and facilitates effective command and control in the initial stages of an incident. The setting up of these calls are routinely exercised within the SWASFT EOCs.

In the event of a Major or Significant Incident (Standby or Declared), each of SWASFT's two EOCs can also notify, or be notified by, the police or fire services via an Inter Control Hailing Talkgroup. Following the initial notification, communications will be transferred to a specific multiagency talk group which will allow the three services to directly communicate regarding that incident through control rooms (while leaving the inter-control talkgroup free for any other notifications). This has been in place since late 2020.

A major incident is any occurrence that presents serious threat to the health of the community or causes such numbers or types of casualties as to require special arrangements to be implemented. An incident such as that involving Mr Ignatov is unlikely



to have met that threshold and therefore is unlikely to have resulted in the activation of the enhanced functionality described above.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Devon and Cornwall Constabulary

Although it relates to a different county within SWASFT's area of operation, I would note that an MOU is in place² between SWASFT and Devon and Cornwall Constabulary for a police officer or appropriate member of police staff, with access to police information and communications systems, to be present within SWASFT's EOCs at times when it is considered that it would be beneficial due to anticipated demand levels. The police officer or staff member works alongside SWASFT Dispatchers, Dispatch Team Leaders and EOC Duty Officers to provide liaison relating to multiagency responses within Devon and Cornwall, and acts as a link between the police control room, operational police officers and the SWASFT EOC.

Trust Incident Manager and Significant Incident

Over the last 18 months we have instituted a Tactical Level Commander on duty within our control rooms and implemented a Significant Incident process to provide focus to complex incidents. In the event of a complex incident this should ensure adequate command arrangements are put into place. This role is also co-located with our special operations desk which dispatches our specialist responders (including Hazardous Area Response Teams - HART) and frequently communicates with multiagency partners.

NILO - National Inter-agency Liaison Officers

The Trust has a cohort of NILOs, who are trained to advise and support Incident Commanders, Police, Fire, military and other Government agencies on SWASFT's operational capacity and capability to reduce risk and safely resolve incidents at which a SWASFT attendance may be required, including major incidents, complex or protracted multi-agency incidents. The Trust has two individuals on call 24/7 who can advise and deploy to support the response to incidents to ensure effective multiagency communication.

Communications with aircraft / vessels

The HEMS (Helicopter Emergency Medical Service) dispatchers located in the Trust's EOCs can dispatch and communicate with any of the six air ambulances operating within the south west. Operational crew on the ground at the scene of an incident can also communicate with an air ambulance via an Airwave talkgroup.

There are not direct communications links with helicopters operated by the National Police Air Service and accordingly communications are routed through the police control room who then contact us by telephone.

2. The most recent version of the MOU, version 13, was signed in April 2023

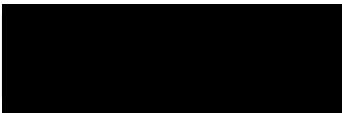


Similarly, communications with Search and Rescue (SAR) aircraft or vessels are usually via telephone calls between the Incident Support Desks within our EOCs and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency control room, who are in contact with their resources. It is potentially possible for the Trust's EOCs to communicate directly with airborne SAR aircraft via the police sharers hailing radio talkgroup or one of the talkgroups used by the air ambulances, which are monitored by our ISD, however this is very rare as it requires the SAR aircraft to switch talkgroup.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in all communications with other organisations relating to ongoing incidents, staff in SWASFT's EOCs and involved with incidents on the ground endeavour to adhere to the JESIP principle of communicating using language which is clear, and free from technical jargon and abbreviations.

Yours sincerely




**Executive Director of Operations /
Deputy Chief Executive**

