



WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

13 November 2023

Dear Mr McLoughlin (HM Senior Coroner),

I write on behalf of the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police in response to the Prevent Future Deaths Report dated 21 August 2023. Whilst I will only comment on paragraph 4, I would like to assure you that West Yorkshire Police (WYP) have considered all the issues you have raised and will continue to work closely with Festival Republic and other partners. Following the 2023 festival, WYP have participated in a number of debriefs with Festival Republic and the Safety Advisory Group.

WYP remains committed to targeting those connected with the supply of drugs at the festival. In the months leading up to the 2023 festival, a dedicated intelligence researcher was used to harness intelligence from a number of different sources. To assist in identifying any trends at U.K. festivals that had taken place before the Leeds Festival, WYP liaised with Festival Republic and the National Police Coordination Centre Strategic Intelligence & Briefing (who provide regular information and intelligence updates during the festival season). As Silver Commander for the Leeds Festival, I also liaised with the Silver Commander for the Reading Festival.

I believe that the additional measures (which I have detailed below) did create a more “hostile environment” for drugs supply at the 2023 festival and led to an increase in the number of arrests, in particular of persons who were in possession of a controlled drug with the intent to supply it to another (PWITS). In 2023 there were 72 total arrests at the event, which included 59 arrests for drug related offences – 4 for Possession and 55 for Drugs Supply offences. The Crown Prosecution Service concluded that there was sufficient evidence in 8 cases to charge and remand a person, with 4 of these already having been prosecuted and receiving significant custodial sentences. The remainder are ongoing police investigations with suspects on bail / under investigation that may progress to charges when the investigations are fully complete.

Only 14 of those arrested for drug offences were from the West Yorkshire area; the majority of offenders resided in the Greater Manchester, Merseyside and South Yorkshire area. WYP intends to liaise with these Police Forces in the lead up to the 2024 festival.

As referred to above, a number of additional measures were implemented for the 2023 festival which included:

- Festival Republic conducted more robust searches at ingress points.
- An increased use of drugs dogs and discreet searches on entry by Festival Republic.
- When drugs were located during entry searches, police detectives were present to triage what the police response should be.
- An increased visible police presence at ingress points.

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- Festival Republic provided drugs messaging at points of ingress on large digital screens.
- Amnesty bins were placed at ingress points.
- Covert operations.
- For the first time, a WYP officer was stationed directly within the Festival Republic Control Room.
- Festival Republic provided additional CCTV operators.

It is important to note that as in previous years, WYP attended daily security briefings where intelligence was shared between WYP and Festival Republic.

These measures ensured that we were able to identify and arrest persons who were supplying drugs. The Crown Prosecution Service decides which cases should be prosecuted and determines the appropriate charges. Where it is appropriate (and in consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service), confiscation or forfeiture orders are sought to deprive the defendant of the proceeds of crime.

After listening to the concerns raised by David's family, WYP have reflected on how the initial stages of the investigation were dealt with and, in future, would ask another night Duty Detective Inspector to attend the hospital with the person who had become ill, allowing the night Duty Inspector at the festival to focus on the crime scene, potential suspects etc.

Debrief discussions between Festival Republic and WYP have suggested that the measures adopted for the 2023 festival will be replicated for the 2024 festival.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Neighbourhoods & Partnerships

Silver Public Order and Public Safety Commander at Leeds Music Festival 2023
Leeds District Police HQ, Elland Rd, Leeds, LS11 8BU
West Yorkshire Police

[REDACTED]