



H.M. Coroner and Senior Coroner Andrew Walker  
Senior Coroner for North London  
Barnet Coroner's Court  
29 Wood Street  
London EN5 4BE



Deputy Assistant Commissioner  
Metropolitan Police Service  
New Scotland Yard  
Victoria Embankment  
London  
SW1A 2JL

Date: 25 October 2023

Dear Mr Walker

I am the Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Professionalism in the Metropolitan Police Service ("MPS"). On behalf of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, I write to provide the response to the matters of concern addressed to the MPS in your Report to Prevent Future Deaths dated 7 September 2023.

On behalf of the MPS may I first of all express my condolences to the family and friends of Lamont Roper, our thoughts and sympathies are very much with them.

The MPS has acknowledged and reviewed all the matters of concern raised in your Regulation 28 Report and responds as follows.

**Matter of Concern 1**

*"The Coroner recommends to the MPS that they consider whether there is any alternative and less cumbersome water rescue equipment [to throw lines] that could be issues to officers on patrols near bodies of water, for example some sort of device that could be inflated quickly and thrown to the person in the water to assist them in floating until a throw line is available".*

**MPS Response**

The MPS Marine Policing Unit ("MPU") are responsible for policing 47 miles of the River Thames in London between Dartford and Hampton Court. They also provide a response to over 250 miles of waterways and other bodies of water across the rest of London such as lakes, reservoirs and canals.



As a 24/7 frontline policing unit, officers in the MPU will face many of the same situations as their landside colleagues such as crime and anti-social behaviour, community issues and security. They proactively patrol the river to detect and prevent crime, maintain public order and help keep London safe. They also respond to calls across London where a water hazard exists.

The MPU work closely with other agencies such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution ("RNLI"), London Fire Brigade ("LFB"), Port of London Authority (PLA), UK Coastguard, London Ambulance Service ("LAS"), Canal & River Trust and the Environment Agency (EA). If someone is in difficulty in the river, the LFB, RNLI or Coastguard will attend. The role of the MPS dive team is to search and recover, it is defined by the following two areas:

**Searching:** This is either searching underwater as part of a proactive deployment or in a reactive capacity looking for discarded property or evidence (for example weapons).

**Recovery:** An incident that has been declared as no longer a rescue but a body recovery.

In response to the Coroner's matter of concern, whilst it is not the responsibility of the MPS Marine Policing Unit to rescue persons who are in difficulty in water, officers will seek to identify water rescue equipment which is easily accessible when such spontaneous incidents arise or when patrolling near bodies of water. This includes throw lines, which are retained in every MPS marked emergency vehicle.

In addition, the MPS Public and Personal Safety Unit ("PPSU") has scoped the current marketplace to ascertain if there are any viable alternatives that would offer carriage of water rescue equipment on the person. No product has currently been identified which would overcome the issues previously outlined, i.e. the cumbersome product design and weight that would have to be additionally factored in. The PPSU will continue to work with stakeholders with key responsibilities in water rescue, to consider the viability in the use of future technologies for use by police officers in such circumstances.

### **Matter of Concern 2**

*"If this not possible to source alternative water rescue equipment that can be carried by officers on cycle patrol, then the family considers that the risks of cycle patrols near bodies of water outweighs the benefits. The Coroner recommends in the alternative that the MPS amends their policies and training to reflect the fact that cycle patrols near bodies of water are potentially very dangerous more*



*so in the absence of water rescue equipment and that in these circumstances careful consideration to continuing the patrol will need to be undertaken at a senior level”.*

#### MPS Response

The MPS Water Intervention Risk Assessment was reviewed and updated at the end of 2021 to outline the risk water and water entry pose. Additional measures include:

- Basic Command Units are to review their geographic areas in order to identify any known water related / mass participation events and activities with local risk assessments to be in place for identified events.
- Basic Command Units are to establish system management for the deployment, use and maintenance of throw lines.
- Basic Command Units are to ensure officers are aware of locations of rescue aids / life-saving equipment whilst ensuring local briefing packages are in place and disseminated throughout the Basic Command Unit.

The circumstances of cycle patrol are the same as those of general patrol duties, in that they are not planned taskings or operations. Throw lines are now available in all marked emergency vehicles which mitigates the risk of officers on foot or cycle patrols having ready access to this provision.

Officers either specifically tasked with patrols by bodies of water, or part of planned operations, are required to have a throw line available to them. This may extend to access from a nearby vehicle.

#### **Matter of Concern 3**

*“The Coroner recommends for the MPS to implement a requirement for officers conducting pre-planned operations along stretches of a canal or other bodies of water to make themselves aware of the availability (or non-availability) of water rescue equipment in order for this to be factored into their ongoing dynamic risk assessment whilst on patrol”.*

#### MPS Response

As above, officers conducting pre-planned operations along bodies of water, are now required to have access to throw lines which is covered in the MPS Water Intervention Risk Assessment.

Furthermore, in the most recent Public and Personal Safety Training (“PPST”) delivered to over 21,500 officers between April 2023 and October 2023, officers were required to view a mandatory

video on the use of throw lines. This video states that attendees must access and digest the information in readiness to be practically assessed at their 'in person' PPST session. PPST is assessed on an officer's competence and ability to meet the learning objectives, therefore if a learner failed to display comprehension of how to use throw lines, they would fail the session and then receive remedial training which could include reviewing the mandated footage again.

#### **Matter of Concern 4**

*"The Coroner makes a recommendation to the MPS to ensure that its officers are made aware the MPS dive team can attend a critical incident involving someone submerged in water even when the team are not on call and/or at night, and that this possibility should therefore be explored at an early stage. This may be achieved by special training and the publication of an operational notice".*

#### **MPS Response**

The role of the MPS Dive Team is to search and recover. To support this the MPS has carried out a number of actions to upskill staff in the Dive Team capacity and provide awareness of the call out procedure.

In June 2022, an e-mail was sent to all MPU officers confirming the Dive Team's capability and availability.

- An Open Water Rescue & Recovery Guide has been produced and was sent to all MPU officers in December 2022 and published on the same date via the MPS Intranet (internal website). This highlights the difference between rescue and recovery and outlines the process for calling the Dive Team. It also provides the 24/7 telephone number of the Marine Unit Duty Officer for advice.
- All incidents involving people in a body of water is now brought to the attention of the 24/7 Marine Unit Duty Officer by the Incident Room. The Marine Unit Duty Officer will review the incident and assess if there is a possibility of a Dive Team call out during out of hours. Discussions will be had with the incident commander around the tactical options and implement any call out if required.
- All current and new Met Grip Chief Inspectors (pan London Control Room supervisors) are briefed by the Dive Team on their capacity and call out procedure. The last course took place at the beginning of September 2023.

- Until recently, all police inspectors' promotion training courses had a Dive Team input to upskill new and current inspectors around capacity and call out procedure. From 2024, this input will be incorporated into the new MPS Leader's Programme.

Coverage of these areas furnishes those in command of an incident involving any person in a body of water, with knowledge of the MPS Dive Teams' capabilities and the process of call out.

#### **Matter of Concern 5**

*"The Coroner recommends that that [throw lines] must be available and issued to all MPS marked emergency vehicles".*

#### **MPS Response**

The MPS procured 4,000 throw lines. By June 2023 they were distributed to all Basic Command Units and placed in all MPS marked emergency vehicles. There is a requirement for front line vehicles to be inspected by local support teams to ensure their suitability for operational use as well as expectations on the police driver to ensure the vehicle is suitable for use and contains all mandatory equipment for safe patrol, including a throw line.

#### **Matter of Concern 6**

*"The Coroner makes a recommendation that steps should be taken to increase the numbers of qualified divers available to police to assist with the respond to an incident".*

#### **MPS Response**

Other agencies, such as the RNLI, LFB and the UK Coastguard have the relevant expertise and responsibilities in water rescue.

The MPS Dive Team are all MPU officers who have received more general MPU training and then chosen to specialise as police divers. The team are commercially endorsed divers, licensed search officers and are trained to operate in confined spaces and hazardous environments. Their responsibilities range from crime searches to body recovery.

The MPS Taskforce Command constantly review and assess team sizes based on the threat, harm and risk balanced with the demand. At this time, the assessment is that there is sufficient police dive team capacity to meet its demand.



**Matter of Concern 7**

*“The Coroner recommends to the MPS that they provide specific training about cycling, whether during a pursuit or otherwise, near to bodies of water in particular as there is a serious risk of future deaths occurring as a result of MPS cycle patrols and pursuits up to 15mph [on electric cycles] near bodies of water. The Coroner recommends that specific policies and training are put in place to ensure that such pursuits are undertaken safely and in a manner such as to mitigate risks of accidents or injury”.*

**MPS Response**

Following this incident, at the beginning of 2022 the MPS reviewed and refreshed its cycle training and now maintains training and resourcing records, for the deployment of officers and staff who have received this training. From April 2023, officers and staff are not permitted to cycle operationally without this current training.

Training is delivered locally by trainers who have attended a Central Trainer’s Course on each Basic Command Unit/Operational Command Unit who in turn will train their officers and staff. The training includes a specific input about pursuits and an understanding of the MPS Pursuits Standard Operating Procedures is covered as part of the cycle training. Advice to officers and staff using cycles near to bodies of water is covered in the MPS patrolling risk assessments.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information from the MPS.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature block]