

████████████████████  
Chief Constable

GREATER MANCHESTER  
**POLICE**



Anna Morris KC  
HM Assistant Coroner  
Coroner for Greater Manchester South

9<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Dear Ms Morris

Thank you for your report dated 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024 in respect of the death of Samuel Curless and pursuant to Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 and Paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

Having carefully considered your report and the evidence provided at the inquest I make the following observations and recommendations to address your matters of concern.

- 1. That in respect of GMP Call Handlers being required to call an ambulance to attend the scene, even where it is reported that someone is “dead” there has been no institutional learning following this incident. I asked ██████████ if there had been any learning, reflection or training since this incident. He said that there hadn’t on this issue.**

As a result of the issues identified in this case GMP commissioned an audit of 33 similar incidents. The purpose of the audit was to understand whether call handlers were following the correct processes and taking the required action when dealing with these types of incidents or whether the issue identified in this case was a symptom of a broader issue across the department. The result of the audit identified one case where the call handler hadn’t contacted the Northwest Ambulance Service (NWS) or asked a colleague to assist in making a call to NWS. The call handler in question has received individual feedback on the issue. The other 32 calls examined each resulted in call handlers either asking colleagues to call NWS or the call handler calling NWS themselves when the initial call had concluded.

When dealing with calls of this nature the expectation is that the call handler will stay on the line with the person reporting the incident to gather the correct information to create and update the incident log to accurately reflect the incident and record the actions taken. Call handlers will normally seek assistance from colleagues in the control room or within the dispatch area to call an ambulance via the Ambulance Emergency lines that are dedicated to the police for such instances.

Due to the nature of calls received by GMP there will be instances of call handlers being able to call the NWS directly once they have gathered all the relevant information and assessed that they are then able to make that call. The process is not prescriptive, call handlers are trained in THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement) and in line with that training they will assess whether they are able to make the call to NWS themselves, or whether they are required to continue with the call and request assistance from colleagues and supervisors to contact NWS.

All Call Handlers receive training in respect of what action to take when dealing with death and the trainers thread the relevant processes throughout the training course, referring students to the service standards expected of them. The service standards are available via the internal IT solution called SHERLOCK which can be accessed by call handlers at any time.

While the result of the audit undertaken following the inquest doesn't indicate a broader issue across the branch, the Force Contact, Crime and Operations Branch will further reinforce the requirements on call handlers to call an ambulance when faced with a scenario such as that which presented in the case of Mr Curless. This will be achieved by way of an email being sent to all call handlers and by including an item on each call handling team's briefing site.

**2. That the training delivered to the first two attending officers did not adequately prepare them for responding to a scene where someone is found hanging in a way which is consistent with their priority to preserve life of a hanging casualty.**

GMP's Police Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) Learning Support Team has reviewed the training provided to student officers in relation to the Dealing with Death Procedure.

All student officers receive a bespoke presentation on the Dealing with Death Procedure. In advance of the session officers are required to complete pre-reading which includes College of Policing Guidance, a Dealing with Death aide memoir, relevant handouts, and a copy of the Dealing with Death procedure.

The lesson plan for the subject is detailed and addresses the different types of death that police officers can expect to encounter during their service which includes deaths caused by hanging.

Trainers delivering the course emphasise that unless a person is clearly deceased, i.e. the head is separated from the body, insect infestation or the body has been underwater for a long period of time, officers should check for signs of life and take relevant action, including calling paramedics who are able to pronounce life extinct.

The training details the 'five building blocks' that officers must apply and adhere to in the event of a death. The number one building block that is always to be addressed first is preservation of life. Preservation of the scene is subordinate to the requirement to preserve life. The training addresses the fact that bodies may appear to be deceased when they are in fact not and officers must always check for signs of life even when they may believe that the person is dead. The training provides several examples of cases where bodies had not been checked assuming death and were later found to be alive.

To support the implementation of this learning, dealing with death has been presented at GMP's monthly Tutor Constable Forum to support those who tutor students on District whilst responding to incidents. Finally, our training Sergeants undertake periodical in-class observations to quality assure both the training content and that the delivery is in line with best practice.



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This case has also been raised at the Tactical Organisational Learning Board (TOLB). The TOLB is attended by representatives from across GMP with a view to sharing the learning and reinforcing the key messages around preservation of life.

3. **I heard evidence from Detective Superintendent [REDACTED] that both attending officers were part of a cohort of at least 650 officers within GMP (and a larger cohort nationally) who received their initial police training entirely online. I am concerned that both officers' training on Sudden Death (and the training of others) was delivered as one of over 15 online modules on a given day and that at the time of the inquest, they had not received any classroom based or on the job training. I am concerned that they are not the only officers within GMP who have received this level/method of training input and therefore there is a risk that other officers on duty have inadequate training on this issue.**

A total of 650 student officers, across nine intakes, received online training between March 2020 and May 2021. The necessity to train officers online during this period was a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the public health measures prescribed by the Government in response.

An additional 270 student officers, across four intakes, received a combination of online and in-person training between July 2020 and August 2021. The hybrid nature of the training provided to this cohort of officers reflected changes to the COVID-19 restrictions in place throughout the officers' training period.

In person training resumed in September 2021 for all subsequent student officer intakes.

The training provided to officers throughout the pandemic was delivered in line with College of Policing guidance and licensing conditions and the online format provided by GMP reflected the approach taken by Police Forces nationally to ensure officers could continue to be trained while COVID-19 social distancing restrictions were in place.

While the officers' actions in this case have given rise to questions in relation to the adequacy of the training delivered via online methods there is nothing to suggest that this is a broader Force-wide issue. However, in line with normal practice, the learning arising from the inquest has been raised at the TOLB to ensure that learning is shared, and key messages are disseminated across the force.

To further reinforce police officer and staff understanding of the Dealing with Death Policy and the expected actions of those at the scene I have tasked the Organisational Learning Hub to disseminate learning across the Force, using a variety of established communications channels, which will include the following:

- Publication of a leading article on the intranet. All officers and staff have access to this site and are able to read the article.



- Including the information in the Organisational Learning Monthly Top Three Bulletin which is e-mailed to every police officer and member of police staff member in GMP.
  - Input at the Tactical Organisational Learning Meeting which includes a representative from all districts, operational branches, People and Development Branch and other Subject Matter Experts.
  - Circulation to Organisational Learning Lead Officers and Deputy Organisational Learning Lead Officers across the Force to ensure the messages are reinforced at a local level.
4. **There was evidence given to me by Detective Superintendent [REDACTED] that there is an unknown number of GMP officers who are not meeting the expectation of receiving First Aid refresher training within 12 months, which since May 2022 has included training on how to resuscitate a hanging casualty. I am therefore concerned that there remains a cohort of officers who have not had the post May 2022 training that includes how to provide Basic Life Support to this kind of casualty until the arrival of an ambulance.**

All police officers receive the policing equivalent of the Health and Safety Executive's Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW) training certificate. This is known across all police forces as the 'Module 1 & 2 First Aid' training course and is derived from the College of Policing First Aid Learning Programme (FALP) syllabus.

The FALP is split into 5 modules, with modules 1 and 2 being a universal requirement for all police officers. Officers can go on to receive further first aid training depending on their role. Module 3 is specific training for those working in custody, Module 4 is the HSE First-Aid at Work training and Module 5 covers enhanced training for those operating as firearms officers or police medics. In the present case the officers who attended the scene would have been trained to Modules 1 & 2 (EFAW) level.

Basic Life Support (BLS) is taught at every level of first-aid training on both the initial and annual refresher training. BLS is covered during the 'no signs of life' session and officers are taught that first aid begins with the first opportunity they have to assess a casualty, in whatever circumstances they are presented with which may include a suicide attempt, water rescue or any other incident - BLS should then commence.

GMP uses the FALP as the core syllabus for its first aid training but in addition to the core syllabus supplementary elements or scenarios are incorporated into the training based upon operational risks and/or learning derived from incidents that have occurred in Greater Manchester or nationally. From April 2022 one of the supplementary elements GMP introduced into the Module 1 and 2 initial and refresher training courses was ligature removal. This training will continue in place moving forward.

In July 2023 GMP also introduced a ligature removal tool in every liveried police vehicle. To ensure the tool remains available for use the presence of the tool in the vehicle forms part of the



weekly vehicle checks. Alongside the introduction of this tool an instructional video was placed on GMP's intranet that provided guidance on how to use the tool. The video remains accessible on GMP's Learning and Skills Hub which is a resource available to all police officers and staff.

The ligature removal tools were also provided to GMP's First Aid training providers for demonstration and use during first aid training for Modules 1 & 2. There are discussions underway to further demonstrate this item of equipment within Police Personal Safety Training.

It is worthy of note that it is not a requirement of FALP Modules 1 & 2 for officers to be trained in the use of a ligature removal tool. It is only at Module 3 of FALP that this training becomes mandatory.

From May 2022 Module 1 & 2 training has been delivered in GMP on a 2-day initial course with a 1-day annual refresher requirement thereafter. Officers who fail to complete the 1-day refresher training within a year of their initial training, and who therefore lapse in their EFAW compliance, must begin the training cycle again by attending the 2-day initial training.

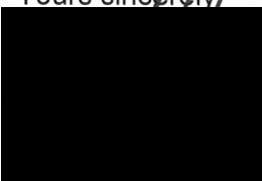
Prior to May 2022 Module 1 & 2 training was a blended learning approach consisting of 6-hour contact training time and 3 hours e-learning. (Equating to 9 hours training each year as derived from the previous version of the FALP).

The change to the delivery of first aid training in May 2022 brought with it a resource management challenge with Districts balancing the amended training requirements with the need to maintain safe staffing levels. This initially led to a larger number of officers failing to meet the annual refresher requirement. There have been significant improvements with compliance over the last two years as the training cycle has matured.

GMP has also improved the governance around first aid training to ensure that officers remain up to date with their training requirements. The numbers are monitored by People & Development Branch Learning Services Team and reported to the Clinical Governance Panel. Attendance data is shared with GMP Districts and Branches on a regular basis, including individual officer details and course booking dates. In addition, First Aid Training is a standing item at GMP's monthly Major Incident Response Governance Board (MIRGB) meeting which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable (DCC). At the monthly meeting the DCC holds Districts and Branches to account in respect of their compliance with the first aid training requirements. First Aid training will remain a focus of the MIRGB moving forward.

I hope this response is helpful and demonstrates GMP's commitment to learning from the tragic death of Mr Curless.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Constable