



Devon & Cornwall  
**POLICE**

**T/ Assistant Chief Constable** [REDACTED]

Police Headquarters, Middlemoor, Exeter, Devon, EX2 7HQ

☎ 101 Non-urgent

📧 @DC\_Police

☎ 999 in an emergency

📧 dc\_police.999

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[REDACTED]  
31st May 2024

Dear Mr Cox

### **Michaela Hall – Prevention of Future Deaths Report**

I write further to your letter dated 3 April 2024 enclosing Prevention of Future Deaths Report. I am grateful for the additional time to provide this response.

Please accept this letter as the formal response submitted on behalf of Devon & Cornwall Police under Rule 29 Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.

I have carefully considered your Judgement and specifically your findings of fact set out between paragraphs 301 – 332 thereof. I note you have helpfully set out the three primary areas dealing with issues relating to Devon & Cornwall Police as follows:

1. Offender Management.
2. The emergency response.
3. The entry issue.

Devon & Cornwall Police welcomes the opportunity for learning and the opportunity to consider ways in which we can enhance efforts to safeguard vulnerable members of our community.

As you have expressed, circumstances surrounding the relationship between Ms Hall and [REDACTED] caused difficulties in the effective safeguarding of Ms Hall and was a challenging context in which to operate.

Where victims of DA are unsupportive of police action, this creates a challenging environment for police to work in. Devon & Cornwall Police officers have a number of tools available to them which were explained during this inquest, and I hope to expand on below.

In response to your Prevention of Future Deaths Report, and with the intention of providing reassurance to you and the family of Ms Hall, I set out here an overview of the ongoing work to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and specifically tackling Domestic Abuse (DA).

VAWG is now a national Strategic Policing requirement and a control strategy priority within Devon & Cornwall Police, with a dedicated strategic and tactical lead. DA has a dedicated portfolio lead and is a significant priority within the force's response to VAWG. Ongoing work continues as part of the VAWG strategic priority to enhance safeguarding for victims of DA.

Work ongoing includes:

#### Evidence Led Prosecutions (ELP)

A review of the use of and process for Evidence Led Prosecutions (ELP) is underway.

This will involve oversight and scrutiny of ELP data to also include scrutiny of data which will enable us to better understand the causes of those cases which are not proceeded with under an ELP and to reflect on these.

As a result of this work, further guidance will be produced for all police officers to supplement their training and understanding of seeking ELPs. It is intended that this enhanced data and guidance will assist the force in understanding and further supporting those victims who feel unable to support a prosecution.

#### Domestic Abuse Operational Procedure

In addition, a new DA Operational Procedure is currently under development. This document takes on board learning from avenues such as Domestic Homicide Reviews and HMICFRS feedback and will aim to support the force in tackling DA effectively. It will include guidance in relation to (but not limited to) positive action, Public Protection Notices (PPNs), DVPN/Os, MARAC, coercive & control and non-fatal strangulation.

#### Operational Procedure for DVPN/DVPOs

A revised Operational Procedure for DVPN/DVPOs, has also been produced for all officers dated 8 May 2024 to support the understanding and use of these protective civil orders.

#### New Opportunities

- Rapid Video Response (RVR) – a pilot providing additional service provision is currently in operation. This provides an immediate response to a victim of domestic abuse, subject to certain criteria being met. A member of the public calling into 101 will have their call assessed and providing they meet suitable criteria; they will be immediately transferred to a live video call with a police officer. A dedicated team is currently in place to provide this level of service.
- Vulnerability Risk Assessment Review – a review of potential improvements to the quality of PPNs which could be made and potential addition of a secondary risk assessment.

- Evidence Led Prosecution guidance – proposed additional guidance for officers focusing on improving the response for victims who cannot/fear to support a prosecution (as mentioned above)
- Additional DA training – to include input to Detective Sergeants' training in addition to the College of Policing requirements (this is already underway).
- Additional DA Matters training with Safelives – initially for Moonstone officers (the Domestic Abuse Investigation & Safeguarding Team) with the intention for this to be rolled out further.
- DA Champion training – to supplement the DA Matters training. Roll out scheduled for June 2024 to support the reinvigoration of the DA champion network.
- In addition, already implemented as a priority within Force Tasking is the oversight of performance data and monitoring of the early arrest of perpetrators of DA.

I hope the above information provides reassurance that, as a force, Devon & Cornwall Police continue to look for opportunities to support victims of domestic abuse, to include where they do not feel able to support police action. This is acting in line with legislation, national guidance and APP, while taking on board learning opportunities through third sector recommendations, such as the DHR process and HMICFRS feedback.

Devon & Cornwall Police will continue to take a proactive approach to tackling DA, to build relationship with and support victims to take police action where appropriate.

We are acutely aware of the difficult situations occurring where police action is not supported by victims. Our officers will continue to be trained and empowered to consider all options available to them to support the safeguarding of those individuals, taking account of and balance the Human Rights of those victims (specifically where there are no concerns present relating to their capacity to make decisions).

#### Power of Entry – s17 Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

I am aware this was a key issue considered at inquest. I have given this matter careful consideration and a review of this subject has been undertaken.

To enhance the knowledge, understanding and confidence of our officers, it is proposed there will be further training input for all police officers on use of their s17 powers. This will specifically include consideration of the risks associated with DA and the importance of assessing this risk when considering the use of s17 powers, in line with national guidance and taking into account case law (such as Syed v Director of Public Prosecutions 2010).

To seek to apply a different threshold to cases where there are associated DA concerns to the threshold provided for in law, would require a national conversation where the parameters of the legislation under s17 PACE and associated national guidance can be fully considered and national guidance provided to all Police forces.

Recognising, however, that there are opportunities for learning which support tackling of DA in such circumstances, the following steps are being taken:

- Implementation of a refresher course for all police officers on the use of police powers under s17 PACE. This is with the aim of specific awareness of risks associated with cases of DA. Conversations with our Learning and Development Department are already underway with a view to rolling out an appropriate provision in 2025.
- Force-wide communications to circulate appropriate learning to all relevant officers and staff. To include reiterating the availability of supervisory support for response officers.
- Circulation of learning arising from this coronial process to all Superintendents to ensure consistency of understanding of safeguarding processes with partner agencies.

### Offender Management

At paragraph 308 of the judgement, I note the suggestion of potential for reflection on the issue of facilitating residential placements for offenders requesting alcohol detox.

As expressed in evidence and recorded in the judgement, there are specific considerations associated with the appropriate allocation of residential placements for detox and there are limited resources in Cornwall and outside of the control of Devon & Cornwall Police. However, our officers and staff within the Integrated Offender Management team will continue to explore these options for appropriate individuals.

### The Emergency Response

A full review of the matters relating to the emergency response has been undertaken. In addition to the evidence given during inquest, I hope to provide further reassurance in this regard.

In relation to communications with Crimestoppers: Crimestoppers have the control room supervisor's telephone numbers for Exeter and Plymouth. This should enable them to contact a supervisor or the sergeant on duty in the control room where required. It has also been communicated to Crimestoppers that, in an emergency; they should dial 999. In addition, to enhance working arrangements, Crimestoppers have access to the 'partners page' on the Single Online Home (SOH) site, and regularly send intelligence and information through to our intelligence department. The control room supervisors confirm they regularly take calls from Crimestoppers during late and night shifts which indicates that the lines of communication are operational on a day-to-day basis. Recognising the issues in this case, we have through ongoing partnership work emphasized the importance of using 999 for emergency calls to ensure professionals know when to use this number.

Learning has been recognised and acted upon in relation to the time taken to dispatch police units on 31 May 2021 in this case.

To enhance police response, we are delivering additional training to all CMCU staff on what constitutes an immediate and prompt call, including examples and defining

the criteria and risk level, and the importance of identifying and tasking an appropriate resource and showing them as on route, as is policy for all immediate calls. Further refresher training will continue as part of the rolling training delivery requirements for the control room.

Following dispatch of units, the control room will monitor the response where capacity allows, tracking the unit to the incident. Where any concerns are held, these are raised with commanders who work closely with the relevant response areas. Working practices remain under review to establish where further enhancements can be made.

For example, there will be introduced a 'code 5 timer' which will require after a certain period, e.g. 15 mins into an immediate response, there will be a check of progress and challenge to the unit as to their attendance time. It is intended this will be in place by the end of May 2024 and written into the deployment policy.

Paragraph 316 of the judgement raises labelling omissions and failures to bring the call-in question to the attention of relevant supervisors in the Command and Control Unit. I can confirm that the current policy directs that anything domestic related is brought to the attention of the Command and Control Sergeant. The Sergeant reviews the log to ensure the correct response. The Control Incident Manager (CIM) should also be notified of every domestic incident, this is in existing policy, despite the grading/risk. In the case of an 'immediate' and a 'prompt' response (not domestic related), the duty response sergeant is not always notified, however, they will be monitoring the airwaves radio to oversee what calls their units are going to. If it is a vulnerable/routine domestic incident, policy directs the Sergeant is notified that a domestic incident has gone onto the 'routine hatpeg'.

Paragraph 317 raises the issue of proactively managing domestic incidents. I hope to reassure you that Devon & Cornwall Police have enhanced the proactive response in terms of domestic incidents. For example, the RVR process described under 'New Opportunities' above, will improve the level of service provided to a victim of DA at first point of contact.

Devon & Cornwall Police also have a new 'priority vulnerable' grading for domestic incidents which gives them a higher priority, and an 'SLA 6 hours' dispatch. This means that our control room Sergeants review and assess DA logs where set criteria is met (ones which don't require an immediate response but do carry a level of risk or vulnerability associated) and these are graded as 'priority vulnerable'. This means they are held in the control room and given a higher priority for dispatch (within 6hrs). Prior to the implementation of this, many of these incidents would have been graded as 'routine' and our response would have been slower as the SLA is 24hrs.

Both measures set out above have enabled us to provide a better, more responsive, service to victims of DA. In circumstances where there is a lack of available units, this is escalated to the Sergeant or CIM as per existing policy.

To mitigate any risk associated with patrol Sergeant resourcing, the control room monitor all held incidents and manage the associated risk. They will review a log if

there are no units on the ground to do so to support decision making of allocated units.

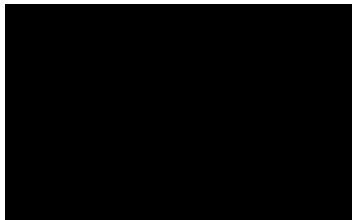
Paragraph 319 explores the concern that a belief is held by response officers that logs are actively reviewed by control room supervisors, which is not the case. I can confirm that further communications to all response officer is being delivered to confirm that this responsibility resets with the CIM and response Sergeants.

Finally, since this incident we have introduced a new auto transfer process where our resource and incident management officer (RIMO) receive within a shorter period of time. In addition, with the embedded guidance (deployment policy) that there should be deployment of resources with minimal information, the time taken for the dispatching of a unit would be reduced, should a similar incident occur now. The command and control target is 5 mins, and regularly achieve 4 mins. The control room are then reliant on the response unit getting there within the response time, where possible in all the circumstances.

I hope the contents of this letter serve to offer reassurance that the issues raised within this inquest and recorded within the Judgement dated 22 March 2024 have been the subject of careful consideration by Devon & Cornwall Police.

We will continue to work to enhance the service provided, working with our partner agencies, to safeguard and protect victims of domestic abuse.

Yours sincerely



  
**Temporary Assistant Chief Constable  
Crime, Justice and Vulnerability**