

Chief Constable

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Mr James Thompson

HM Assistant Coroner for Gateshead and South Tyneside

BY EMAIL

11 June 2024

Dear Mr Thompson,

IN THE MATTER OF STEVYN CARR - REGULATION 28 RESPONSE

I refer to your regulation 28 report ("the Report") dated 15 April 2024 addressed to the Chief Constable. The Chief Constable has requested that I respond on her behalf.

Improvements since November 2021

Since Stevyn's sad death in November 2021 there have been a considerable number of changes to processes and procedures in the Control Room which have resulted in an improved police response to incidents: -

Overall, since November 2021 we have improved both the time to answer 999 and non-emergency calls alongside improvements in the attendance times for incidents. This combined means we are able to respond to calls for service in a timelier manner.

- A 44 second improvement in answering 999 calls.
- An 8-minute improvement in answering 101 non-emergency calls.

- A 4-minute improvement to the average response time for a priority 1 incident.
- A 15-minute improvement to the average response time for a priority 2 incident.

There have been improvements across the department in terms of the identification of vulnerable victims and incidents which have centred around the THRIVE assessment made by the contact handler, which looks to identify threat, harm risk, investigative opportunities, vulnerability and level of engagement at the first point of contact, but also through the life of the incident with further THRIVE assessments completed when required. THRIVE has become a standing agenda item on the Protected Learning Days for Communications staff which includes best practice alongside areas of learning.

Internal business assurance has been undertaken which shows improved identification of vulnerability, highlighting the interventions mentioned have supported the improved recording of vulnerable incidents. November 2021 recorded 28% of grade 2 incidents as vulnerable with May 2024 seeing a 7% increase at 35%. This is an increase which has slowly developed and is being maintained over time.

In relation to the actual incident, it is believed this would now be identified as a vulnerable incident but a definitive response to this cannot be provided as each assessment is a subjective assessment made by an individual. We have however implemented an enhanced process for Grade 2 incidents that were not attended within SLA to ensure a continued assessment of the risk.

This process includes escalation for delayed incidents. At times of peak demand or where other incidents are occurring which must take precedence and require multiple resources, then if a response to a Grade 2 incident is delayed a Resource Controller re-contacts the caller to update them, assess any changes to the THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement) risk assessment, consider whether further safeguarding advice is relevant and update the incident, considering whether there is an increased importance to the incident deployment.

There is now a full time Risk Management Desk in place, whose responsibility is the ongoing assessment and mitigation of risk within vulnerable incidents. If a caller is classified as Vulnerable from their initial Grade 2 (G2V) call then in the event the incident is not responded to within one hour the Risk Management Desk will re-contact the caller and undertake a full review of their risks and vulnerabilities and assess if the incident requires a change of grading.

The re-contact of a caller occurs if we are unable to attend an incident within an hour. At times of higher demand when attendance may be delayed further this process is repeated to ensure our victims are kept updated but also that we continually re-assess the risk and prioritisation of deployment.

Recognising that our performance for non-emergency incidents could be improved, a review of the deployment model has been completed. This review has led to the introduction of a Grade 3 response which will have dedicated resources to deploy to the incidents within 24 hours of the caller contacting the police. The response will be diarised in accordance with victim availability and will be serviced by single crewed officers. Incidents which will remain graded as G2 incidents will be those with elements of vulnerability or other time critical issues. This change to the grading structure enables Communications staff and frontline officers to identify which non-emergency incidents require a timelier response, to enable them to deploy resources more appropriately.

Since this incident the *“Right Care, Right Person”* (RCRP) process is also now live within Northumbria Police. RCRP is an initiative which has been implemented nationally within policing and seeks to ensure that the most appropriate agency responds to requests for assistance from members of the public. Incidents for RCRP are still risk assessed using THRIVE, but the most appropriate agency to engage with the caller may not always be the police. All Communications staff have received training in RCRP. The force incident management system (Storm) has been altered so that Communications Department staff may use call scripts to assist in their decision making. The Risk Management Desk, which is staffed with experienced police officers, conduct a secondary review for incidents where the Call Handler is uncertain if an incident fits the criteria for RCRP.

In addition, since the incident each Response Team now has a dedicated Sergeant who reviews incidents and assists the Communications Department in assigning resources. This ensures a swifter level of service.

The Force moved to a new Operating Model on the 4th March this year which included a re-alignment of staff to each of the 6 area commands and a more enhanced leadership structure for each area. This means that there are increased officer numbers working in response policing giving us a better ability to meet calls for service in a timely manner aligned to more focussed leadership and accountability. Although the model has only been running for a short period of time it is evident this has had a positive impact with improvements in the percentage of incidents attended within our stated times, a 13.3% improvement in grade 2 incidents and

a 15.1% improvement in vulnerable grade 2 incidents against the year before. There is also high-level oversight and scrutiny of response times during the daily Pacesetter meeting, which is chaired by the Force Gold Commander. We expect still further improvement in our response times as we embed this new force operating model.

Conclusion

Northumbria Police takes its responsibility to respond to emergencies extremely seriously. We are committed to continuous improvement to the service we provide to our communities. How we respond to the public when they need us forms a significant part of the service we provide, which we seek to improve through enhanced call and incident management. We have invested significantly in this area and continue to do so.

Yours sincerely



Head of Communications