



Mr Christopher Murray
HM Assistant Coroner
Manchester South Coronial Area
Mount Tabor
Stockport

Our Ref: [REDACTED]
Date: 15 January 2025

Dear Mr. Murray

RE: Regulation 28 Report into the death of Michael Sean Heath.

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report dated 2nd October 2024 concerning the sad death of Michael Heath on 25th August 2023. On behalf of Trafford Council, I would like to begin by offering our sincere condolences to Mr. Heath's family for their loss.

I am grateful for you highlighting your concerns during Mr. Heath's Inquest which concluded on 30th September 2024 and regret that you have had to bring these matters of concern to my attention. We recognise it is particularly important to ensure we address the concerns you raise, in order to maintain the quality and safety of future services.

Within your listed matters, you have raised over-arching concerns regarding Policing, the management of mental health patients, the quality of collaboration between mental health services both abroad and in the UK upon repatriation whilst the patient remains ill and GP decision-making – and I note that there is no specific reference to the actions of Trafford Council within those listed concerns. As these concerns do not relate to the actions nor decision-making of Trafford Council you will appreciate that I am unable to specifically address these with a respective timetable for action.

I do however also note that within the circumstances of Mr. Heath's death, you have highlighted that Trafford Council Adult Social Care failed to verify whether the Police were responding to Mr. Heath on 25th August 2023. In response to this, the Council has proactively put into place preventative measures to ensure that similar incidents do not arise in future. To that end, below are the process and measures that have been put in place.

Access Trafford

The Access Trafford Service have now implemented and follow a multiple step procedure to address and respond to incoming telephone calls received by people presenting with suicidal ideation, and staff have been trained in the process (it is worth noting that the actual number of such individuals coming through to Access Trafford is low). The process is annexed to this letter in Annex 1.

Monitoring of how this procedure is being applied in operation has been completed, with two such telephone calls received dated since Mr Heath's death, to ensure that the process was established and followed through effectively; both calls were routed through to the Police. The exercise involved the Access Trafford staff members who received the calls discussing the interaction with Customer Services management to reflect on the conversations, evaluate the effectiveness of the call handling and to confirm the process that was followed. The procedure utilised the essential stages of engaging with the individual, assessment of risk, gathering of essential information, co-ordinating the emergency response and documenting the actions taken to maintain a robust audit trail.

The review provided quality assurance and confirmed that the two cases handled by Access Trafford adhered to our revised procedures and staff were consistent in following the protocol to ensure the individuals were safeguarded appropriately. All Access Trafford staff including management have received training around suicide awareness and the handling of calls relating to this extremely sensitive matter.

The quality assurance activity and reflective discussions with the call handlers in respect of these has provided assurance that the process is being implemented and is also effective in practice. It was demonstrated that the process was able to identify the risk, provide an appropriate response and ensure the safety of the individual. This exercise also highlighted the significance of keeping these practices under regular review to maintain high standards and effectively adapt to any changes in the nature of cases arising or the operational environment.

There is a program of training for all call handlers at Access Trafford which includes regular check-ins and supervision with management on this important issue and the service management actively engage with staff with open and consistent conversations on suicide awareness.

Suicide awareness initiatives

Trafford Council has an established multi-disciplinary stakeholder in the Suicide Prevention Board which is chaired by the Executive Member for Healthy and Independent Lives and facilitated by Public Health colleagues. The Board has a detailed action plan with the aim of how partners will collectively take action to reduce incidents of suicide and potential suicide.

The Coroner is referred to the annexed Trafford Suicide Prevention Strategy for 2022-2025 'Reflect, Review, Refocus and Recover' (Annex 2), which draws together the shared vision and priorities for Trafford Council in collaboration with other key partners focussed on preventing suicide. The document updates the strategy and highlights the achievements and Trafford's continuing priorities and the work supporting this. There is a comprehensive appraisal contained within of identified risk factors which are essential factors to be considered against vital preventative work, ensuring that the local authority has a sound awareness of this to inform its interventions and support to those vulnerable adults who are identified as being at risk.

Also annexed for the Coroner's attention is the 'Key Highlights' document (Annex 3) which summaries key achievements over the past 12 months in terms of suicide prevention work as part of Trafford's prevention strategy. Trafford proactively introduced the below initiatives and conversations will feature on team meeting agendas to signpost staff to resources available. Achievements included but not limited to:

- Focussed task and finish groups, with specific objectives in relation to call handling, response related to suicide surveillance data, and staff support;
- Development of an online 'Suicide Awareness and Support Toolkit', containing resources and signposts available for staff to ensure they can access the support available;
- Identification of suicide prevention training opportunities via survey;
- 'Shine a light on suicide awareness' campaign launched in September 2024, aimed at raising awareness of suicide by encouraging open conversations; the website was commissioned by NHS Greater Manchester and can be accessed via the following link:

[Homepage - Shining a Light on Suicide](#)

This initiative has been integrated into Trafford Council's staff induction training;

- Trafford Council's 'Month of Hope' walks as part of the 'Shine a Light ...' campaign which featured co-ordinated local walks for Council staff from sites within the borough with an offering of refreshments at the end of the walk for those wishing to take part. The walks were intended for staff to get out into the fresh air, meet new people and engage in open conversations around suicide awareness. As part of this, Trafford promoted a public walk on 18th September 2024 which attracted positive engagement from the community.
- Adult Social Care staff who take calls from members of the public who may have concerns about their own or a family members wellbeing have accessed external training around the important topic of suicide.

Strengthening Adult Social Care Practice

In addition to the Suicide Prevention Board the Council has established an 'Improving Lives Every Day (ILED)' Board. This is an independently chaired Board which aims to strengthen practice and service delivery across Adult Social Care and the partnership. Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust ('GMMH) are a member of this Board and as such are committed to further strengthening our safeguarding activity and our Mental Health working.

The Board has a detailed program of work that is being delivered through several dedicated work streams – including a work stream to strengthen the quality and consistency of all our safeguarding activity. In addition, there are dedicated work force development and mental priorities within the programme. Our workforce development programme has included the rollout of the Legal Literacy training programme (commenced April 2024) and has 3 core components.

- Legal & Ethical Literacy
- Implementing the Care Act
- Safeguarding Adults and the Law

The delivery of this program is inclusive of GMMH social work staff, and we are actively monitoring the take up of this training. In addition we have invested, strengthened and enhanced our Mental Health management and practitioner capacity which is enabling greater scrutiny and oversight of our mental health work.

Awareness of and learning from SAR and outcomes

Trafford Council has been proactive in identifying and implementing learning from the Safeguarding Adults Review that was commissioned in Mr Heath's case. As part of that learning, the fourth annexed document (Annex 4) comprises an update from Trafford's Adult Social Care service on the single agency recommendations from the SAR. This details the respective progress and actions against each recommendation. Whilst we are

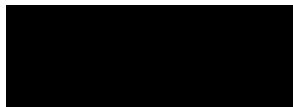
committed to reviewing and transforming our front door arrangements, we are building upon the learning from SARs and our improvement work to ensure the changes we are making are co-produced and will support early identification of care and support needs and deliver the support our vulnerable residents may need.


As well as progressing our single agency actions there has been a dedicated focus during our recently held Adult Safeguarding Week with regards to mental health responsibilities and collaborative activity.

I hope this response demonstrates to you and Mr. Heath's family that Trafford Council has taken the concerns you have raised seriously and is committed to working together as a system including our service users, carers and families to continually improve the care provided.

Thank you for bringing these important issues to my attention and please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further information.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.


Corporate Director (Children's Services) & Interim Director (Adults Services)
Trafford Borough Council

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Annex 1: AT Procedure

Annex 2: Trafford Suicide Prevention Strategy for 2022-2025

Annex 3: TSPS Key Highlights

Annex 4: ASC Update: SAR Single Agency Recommendations