

IN THE SURREY CORONER'S COURT
IN THE MATTER OF:

The Inquests Touching the Death of Natasha Johnston
A Regulation 28 Report – Action to Prevent Future Deaths

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| | <p>REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS</p> <p>THIS REPORT IS BEING SENT TO:</p> <p>1. [REDACTED] The Secretary of State for the Home Department</p> <p>2. [REDACTED] The Chief Executive Officer of Surrey County Council</p> |
| 1 | <p>CORONER</p> <p>Richard Travers HM Senior Coroner for Surrey</p> |
| 2 | <p>CORONER'S LEGAL POWERS</p> <p>I make this report under paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 5 to The Coroners and Justice Act 2009.</p> |
| 3 | <p>INVESTIGATION and INQUEST</p> <p>The inquest into the death of Natasha Johnston was heard and concluded on the 21st October 2024.</p> <p>The medical cause of Ms Johnston's death was:</p> <p>1a: Shock and Haemorrhage including Perforation of the Left Jugular Vein</p> <p>1b: Multiple Penetrating Dog Bites to Neck, Arms and Torso</p> |
| 4 | <p>CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH</p> <p>In the early afternoon of the 12th January 2023, Ms Johnston was walking some eight dogs in the area of the 'Viewpoint', Gravelly Hill, Caterham, Surrey. The dogs ranged dramatically both in size and</p> |

weight, from small to very large. She was in the habit of acting as a dog walker and had walked these same dogs on previous occasions without difficulty. Between approximately 14:00 hours and 15:00 hours she was seen in the area, by a number of different people.

Initially, she appeared to be in control of the dogs, but as time went by, the dogs became increasingly excited and out of her control.

At one point she was seen by another dog walker with a large group of dogs. He had seen her before with a lot of dogs and, as before, on seeing him she immediately turned around called the dogs and went in the opposite direction with the dogs following.

Another person, who was out exercising, saw her with a large number of dogs. He stood to one side to allow her to pass and one of the larger dogs jumped up at him and put its paws on his chest, albeit causing him no harm.

At another point, two riders came across her, at that time she was sat on the floor surrounded by a group of dogs, their leads were all tangled up. She shouted, 'go back, go back'. The dogs were not attacking her, but they were out of control. Two of them ran towards the horses frightening them and causing one of them to bolt with the result that its rider was thrown to the ground.

After this, one of the larger dogs, began worrying a smaller dog that was being walked by its owner. On picking up her dog, the owner was then bitten in her left buttock, by this dog, causing her severe pain and injury. By the time of the last two encounters, the dogs were no longer in Ms Johnston's control.

A short while later, another walker's attention was drawn, by a fellow walker, to a large number of dogs that were all off their leads and causing a commotion. On going to investigate he saw an object at the bottom of a nearby very steep slope. He descended the slope to see two of the dogs with blood on their muzzles in the vicinity of the object, which, as he approached, he recognised to be the body of a woman, this was Ms Johnson. Despite the aggressive stance of the dogs, he approached Ms Johnston, who was covered in blood and had suffered a large number of puncture wounds. He could not find any signs of life, but called the ambulance service and, under their instruction, began CPR on Ms Johnston. Despite his attempts and those of two police officers and a paramedic, Ms Johnston remained unresponsive. Ms Johnston's death was recognised at 15:29 that same day; she had died from her wounds. It was clear that she had been the subject of a vicious dog attack by an unknown number of dogs, which had formed part of the group of eight dogs that she had been walking that day. The post mortem examination revealed that she had sustained multiple injuries consistent with dog bites and claw marks. The concentration of

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| | <p>bite marks was particularly severe around the neck. They had led to the penetration of the jugular vein, which in itself would have been fatal. However, the remaining bite marks would also have led to catastrophic haemorrhage which would also have resulted in her death. There were no other injuries that could have caused or contributed to death.</p> <p>Whilst, when she was first seen, Ms Johnston appeared to have some control over the dogs, it was readily apparent that as time went by that any such control was lost, eventually with a tragic result. Bearing in mind the sheer number and size of the dogs involved, her inability to control and to hold them was not surprising.</p> <p>I heard evidence that, whilst there maybe guidance available as to the maximum number of dogs a person should walk on their own in a public place, there is no actual restriction on the number or size of dogs that a person can walk on their own in a public place, either locally or nationally.</p> |
| 5 | <p><u>CORONER'S CONCERNS</u></p> <p>During the course of the inquest the evidence revealed matters that gave rise to concerns that circumstances creating a risk of other deaths will continue to exist in the future unless action is taken.</p> <p>The MATTERS OF CONCERN are as follows. –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The lack of regulation, both locally and nationally, that restricts the number and weight of dogs that an individual person can walk on their own in a public place. 2. Consideration should be given to limiting the number and gross weight of dogs an individual person should be allowed to walk in a public place, both for their own safety and for the safety of others. |
| 6 | <p>ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN</p> <p>In my opinion action should be taken to prevent future deaths and I believe that those people identified in the first section of this report have power to take such action.</p> |
| 7 | <p>YOUR RESPONSE</p> <p>You are under a duty to respond to this report within 56 days of its date; I may extend that period on request.</p> |

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| | Your response must contain details of action taken or proposed to be taken, setting out the timetable for such action. Otherwise, you must explain why no action is proposed. |
| 8 | <p>COPIES</p> <p>I have sent a copy of this report to the following Interested Persons in the Inquest and to the Chief Coroner.</p> <p>1. [REDACTED]</p> |
| 9 | <p>Signed:</p> <p><i>Richard Travers</i></p> <p>DATED this 25th October 2024</p> |