

## REGULATION 28: REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS (1)

*NOTE: This form is to be used **after** an inquest.*

	<b>REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS</b> <b>THIS REPORT IS BEING SENT TO:</b>  1. <b>Secretary of State for the Home Department</b>  2. <b>Secretary of State for Health</b>
1	<b>CORONER</b>  I am Rachael Clare Griffin, Senior Coroner, for the Coroner Area of Dorset.
2	<b>CORONER'S LEGAL POWERS</b>  I make this report under paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and Regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.
3	<b>INVESTIGATION and INQUEST</b>  On 16 <sup>th</sup> April 2024, I commenced an investigation into the death of Jairus Joshua Timothy Earl, born on the 8 <sup>th</sup> June 2008, who was aged 15 years at the time of his death.  The investigation concluded at the end of the Inquest on the 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2025.  The medical cause of death was:  Ia Fatal shotgun injury to the head  The conclusion of the Inquest was suicide.
4	<b>CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH</b>  Jairus was 15 years old when he died on the 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2024. He had a history of mental ill health and had been under the care of his General Practitioner, a Chartered Psychologist and a Consultant in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. He had disclosed to them thoughts of ending his life and although he had no plans to do so, he had talked about methods of doing this which included shooting.  His father, who Jairus resided with, was a shotgun licence holder. Jairus enjoyed outdoor life and would go out with his father and other family members shooting.  The family resided in London, which is where the shotgun licence was held, however they had another home in Dorset.  At the end of March 2024, the family travelled to Dorset to spend some time together at their home in Dorset. They took with them a number of shotguns which were then placed in a secure cabinet at the home address in Dorset. Dorset Police were not advised of the location of these guns in the Dorset area as there is no

	<p>current legal requirement to notify the force where additional places of residence may be.</p> <p>On the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024 Jairus and his father were due to return to their home in London and were closing down the property. Jairius' father was in the process of packing the guns into his car to transport them to London when Jairus went into the office at the property where he used one of the shotguns to end his life.</p>
5	<p><b><u>CORONER'S CONCERNS</u></b></p> <p>During the course of the investigation the evidence provided revealed matters giving rise to concern. In my opinion there is a risk that future deaths could occur unless action is taken. In the circumstances it is my statutory duty to report to you.</p> <p>The <b>MATTERS OF CONCERN</b> are as follows. –</p> <p>(1) I have concerns in relation to gaps in the regulation of shotgun licences especially when a licence holder has more than one property where the guns may be used or stored. The <i>Firearms Act 1968 (The Act)</i> is the primary legislation that governs the possession and handling of firearms. This is supported by statutory guidance, <i>Firearms Licensing: Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Police</i> and non statutory Home Office guidance, <i>Guide on firearms Licensing Law</i>.</p> <p>Section 2 of <i>the Act</i> deals with the requirement of certificate for possession of shotguns. Evidence was given at the Inquest by Acting Chief Inspector [REDACTED] of Dorset Police who works within the Dorset Firearms and Explosive Licensing Unit and also works with the College of Policing and the national Firearms &amp; Explosive Licensing Working Group to review and update the Home Office statutory guidance and support the national training effort in response to the Prevention of Future Deaths report from the Inquest touching upon the deaths in Keyham on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021.</p> <p>He gave evidence that the regulation for shotguns is different to the regulations for firearms which is governed by Section 1 of <i>The Act</i>. There seems to be a great deal of difference in the regulation of firearms and the regulation of shotguns, however both can equally cause death.</p> <p>I am concerned that the lack of regulation around shotguns could lead to future deaths. For example, he explained that there is no obligation on a licence holder of a shotgun licence to notify the approving force they are moving to or visiting another property</p> <p>In his written evidence to the Court, which was further expanded on orally at the Inquest, he explained:</p> <p><i>“Under section 26B(1) of the 1968 Act, an application for the grant of a shotgun shall be made to the chief officer of police where the applicant resides, there is nothing within the firearms act to define a residence or when applicants have properties in different force areas, the non-statutory guide tells me that where an applicant has a residences in different force areas, it is for the individual to decide which force issues their certificate.</i></p> <p><i>Shotgun certificates are issued by individual forces' and will display the force crest and signature of the chief officer of the issuing force, however</i></p>

*they are valid throughout England and Wales, and allows the holder to travel with their shotguns anywhere in the United Kingdom.*

*...*

*Shotgun certificates differ from firearm certificates in a number of ways, for firearms, possession of each and every gun must satisfy individual good reason, whereas a good reason for a shotgun is a collective term, and more relaxed, for example a request for a firearms certificate for target shooting will require that the applicant is a member of a Home Office approved club and shoots regularly, whereas a mere intention to undertake clay pigeon shooting would satisfy good reason for a shotgun certificate.*

*A shotgun certificate also will also authorise a person to have in their possession, purchase or acquire an unlimited number of shotguns without the need for approval in respect of individual guns, that is to say that so long as the shotguns are stored securely a person may have as many as they want.*

*Another nuance of the shotgun certificate is the '72-hour rule' that it will allow a certificate holder to borrow a shotgun for up to 72 hours without the need to have to record the shotgun on the certificate or notify the police of the transfer.*

*...*

*Section 28(2)(a) of the 1968 Act provides that a shotgun certificate is granted subject to any prescribed conditions, and no others, that is that these conditions must be applied to the certificate, but the chief officer cannot add additional conditions.*

*....*


*There is no onus on an applicant to notify another force area where they hold a certificate and have another address in that force area, this is only the case if the certificate holder changes their permanent address that this would be captured by the third condition.*

*There is also no obligation on a certificate holder to notify a chief officer of police when they intent to visit another force area in possession of their shotguns.*

Acting Chief Inspector [REDACTED] explained that on the Tuesday following Jairus' death he briefed the national coordinator from the Firearms & Explosive Licencing Working Group to raise matters arising from the circumstances of Jairus' death so there is awareness of the issues relating to second homes, however, there is no legal requirement for second homes to be declared by licence holders.

He further told the Court that in 2015, HM Inspection of Firearms Licencing recommended that forces must have a notification system on their local records to identify addresses and people where firearms are held. He explained that these systems are local rather than national and his recommendation to the Firearms & Explosive Licencing Working Group

	<p>following Jairus's death was that where an applicant declares a second home, the force where that home is located should be notified.</p> <p>Dorset Police have taken action and put a system in place that when they are notified of the above, they will create a record on their system to flag the address as if that were a Dorset certificate holder, however it is not a legal requirement for forces to do this, and it is unknown if other forces nationally are doing this.</p> <p>I therefore have concerns there is a lack of a system of sharing and flagging information between Police forces regarding shotgun licence holders and the location of shotguns, which could lead to future deaths.</p> <p>Accordingly, emergency services may attend an address where shotguns are held without knowledge of that fact due to the lack of a marker being placed on the address. This causes a risk to all those attending unmarked addresses as they would potentially be ill prepared for what they could face which could lead to future deaths.</p> <p>Additionally failing to have such markers on additional homes means that if the police are called to the address for other reasons such as a concern for welfare, they may miss the opportunity to put in place additional security measures ,or even revoke the licence, as required for the safety of the occupants at the address, and others. Evidence was heard that Dorset Police were called to Jairus's family address in Dorset on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024 following a report that Jairus was missing. It was not apparent from the Police system at the time that there would be shotguns at the address. Jairus's mental health was discussed during the report of this incident. Had the flag system been in place then, consideration could have been given to the continued possession of the shotgun in a property where Jairus could access them.</p> <p>(2) Further I have a concern around the access that police forces have to medical information about other persons living at the same property as the applicant, or at their second homes, when considering firearm and shotgun licence applications. Acting Chief Inspector [REDACTED] advised the Court that whilst Police forces can look at the medical history of the applicant and can speak to others present at the address, they have no legal right to access the medical records of others residing at the property.</p> <p>The medical history of Jairus came as great surprise to the attending Police officers at the Inquest. I am concerned that the lack of access to this medical information of others residing at the address of a licence applicant, especially in relation to mental health, when considering firearms or shotgun licence applications could lead to future deaths.</p>
"6	<p><b>ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN</b></p> <p>In my opinion action should be taken to prevent future deaths and I believe you have the power to take such action.</p>
7	<p><b>YOUR RESPONSE</b></p>

	<p>You are under a duty to respond to this report within 56 days of the date of this report, namely by 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025. I, the coroner, may extend the period.</p> <p>Your response must contain details of action taken or proposed to be taken, setting out the timetable for action. Otherwise, you must explain why no action is proposed.</p>
8	<p><b>COPIES and PUBLICATION</b></p> <p>I have sent a copy of my report to the Chief Coroner and to the following Interested Persons via their legal representatives:</p> <p>(1) Jairus' family</p> <p>I am also under a duty to send the Chief Coroner a copy of your response.</p> <p>I have also sent this report to the following who may find it of interest:</p> <p>(1) Chief Executive Officer of the College of Policing  (2) Chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council  (3) Dorset Child Death Overview panel</p> <p>The Chief Coroner may publish either or both in a complete or redacted or summary form. He may send a copy of this report to any person who he believes may find it useful or of interest. You may make representations to me, the coroner, at the time of your response, about the release or the publication of your response by the Chief Coroner.</p>
9	<p><b>Signed</b></p>  <p><b>Rachael C Griffin, HM Senior Coroner for Dorset</b></p> <p><b>10<sup>th</sup> July 2025</b></p>