Chief Coroner

HHJ ALEXIA DURRAN

[redacted]
Secretary of State for Education

[redacted]

24 December 2025

Dear Ms Phillipson

Prevention of Future Deaths Report – Lucy-Anne Dyson nee Rushton

Thank you for copying to me your response dated 19 November 2025 to the Prevention of Future Deaths Report (PFD) relating to the inquest into the death of Lucy-Anne Dyson. I fully support the desire to tackle violence against women and girls, and I understand that the Government's strategy to do this includes involving communities in the push for change, so publicising brutality when it occurs is important, politically. However, a PFD report is not a political tool. A PFD report is a decision by a judge that action should be taken to prevent future deaths.

The purpose of the coroner's investigation into a death is to provide answers to four statutory questions, namely who the deceased was and when, where and how the deceased came by his or her death. 'How' is usually confined to meaning 'by what means', but where the enhanced duty of investigation arises under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the coroner or jury must examine the wider circumstances in which the death occurred. However, in both types of inquest, the coroner or jury cannot express an opinion on any topic other than the four statutory matters to be ascertained, and the attribution of blame forms no part of the coroner's role. The 2009 Act expressly prevents inquest determinations from being framed in such a way as to appear to determine any question of civil liability or any question of criminal liability on the part of a named person. A coroner or jury's determination will therefore never state that a particular person brutally beat and killed the deceased. Such findings are made in criminal proceedings, not in coronial ones. It may also be useful to note that a medical cause of death, such a 'multiple blunt force injuries' is a narrow statement of the medical reason the person died. It is not appropriate as part of the medical cause of death to include a wider statement about how the injuries were caused.

The PFD Report in Lucy-Anne Dyson's case states that she died 'as a result of a prolonged, severe and brutal attack' and that she was unlawfully killed, these were the findings of the jury as boxes 3 and 4 of the PFD report make clear. 'Unlawful killing' is a shortform conclusion that can be used in coronial cases where the coroner or jury is satisfied that a death was caused by murder, manslaughter or infanticide.

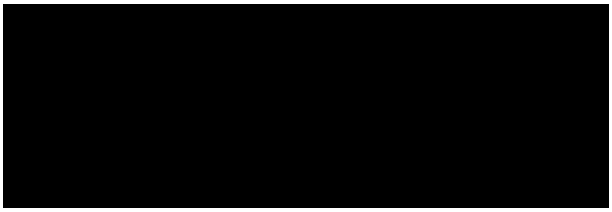
I am disappointed that you decided to include in your PFD response a criticism of the wording used in the PFD Report. As I have explained, coroners and their juries cannot attribute violence to a named person and

there is a framework within which their findings and conclusions must be expressed. In addition, it is not appropriate for a member of the Government to criticise a judicial decision. Coroners are judges, and criticising their decisions in this way is incompatible with judicial independence.

I note your concern about the email address used by the coroner to contact you. Coroners do what they can to establish the correct addresses to which PFD Reports should be sent, but there is chronic under-resourcing across the service, and the correct contact details are not always easy to determine, particularly when a recipient of a report has not had prior involvement in the proceedings. To assist with this, I am intending to create a list of contact details of the organisations that often receive PFD reports. That will enable those organisations to specify where they would like PFD Reports to be sent. When the list is published, I will circulate the details to all Government departments, so that information can be added or amended, as appropriate.

I have decided to publish your full response to the PFD Report, on open justice grounds. However, I will also be publishing this letter alongside it, to enable the public to understand more fully how coroner's and their jury's decisions are reached, and the limits to how those decisions can be expressed.

Yours sincerely,



HHJ ALEXIA DURRAN
CHIEF CORONER OF ENGLAND AND WALES