



**HM Coroner Rachael Griffin,**  
The Coroner's Office for the Count of Dorset,  
Civic Centre, Bourne Avenue  
Bournemouth  
BH2 6DY

01 May 2026

**Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths, Mr Oliver John Roberts, 10.05.1994.**

Dear HM Coroner Griffin,

Thank you for your report into the tragic death of Mr Oliver John Roberts and I acknowledge the concerns that you have outlined in section 5 and our duty to respond.

While you kindly outline the circumstances of Mr Roberts' passing within your report, I thought it may be helpful to contextualise the below response with a succinct chronological narrative. As I understand it, Mr Roberts was reported missing on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 13:48. The Force Incident Manager classified this report as 'medium risk,' at 16:00 on that same date. The last time that Mr Roberts was known to be alive was provided as 19:39. At 23:05 on that same date, the missing report was upgraded to 'high risk.' At 12:32 on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024, a Grade 2 application was sent to the CDI Team. Tragically, Mr Roberts was found deceased at 14:40. I have provided a reply under each point that you have referenced as matters of concern.

**Matters of Concern**

- 1. There is a lack of guidance to assist Police Officers in the practical application of their powers to obtain communications data, whether that be under a Grade 1, 2 or 3 application.**

There is eLearning training that is available for investigators on our national 'College Learn,' platform. These learning packages "Introduction to Communications Data," sit within the Digital Media Investigators (DMI) modules. Within this training there is emphasis on Grade 1's requiring an 'immediate threat to life, and Grade 2's requiring ..." a serious concern for the welfare of a vulnerable person where urgent provision of the communications data will have an immediate and positive impact on the investigation or operations." This training is available for all police officers and staff across England and Wales. (Please also see my response to point five, for additional available training).

- 2. Communications data can be obtained by Police forces in England and Wales pursuant to the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (the Act). In November 2018 the Home Office issued the Communication Data Codes of Practice (the Codes of Practice) which is a document that extends to 144 pages and relates to the exercise of functions conferred by virtue of Parts 3 & 4 of the Act.**

Although I recognise that the June 2025 [Home Office Communications Data Code of Practice publication](#) postdates Mr Roberts' passing, I would hope that you are also reassured by section 5.47, which outlines the circumstances in which an urgent authorisation may be appropriate, reading, "an immediate threat of loss or serious harm to human life - this may include those situations where, for example, there is serious concern for the welfare of a vulnerable person including children at imminent risk of being abused or otherwise harmed."

- 3. Requests are submitted by police representatives to their Communication Data Investigation Teams to access data, and this will be done in different ways depending on the grading of the request.**

All communications data (CD) applications are requested by an applicant using the force workflow system. The UK has three workflow platforms, 'Charter,' 'Cycomms,' and 'Optica.' The authorisation body, which is the Investigatory Powers Commissioners' Office- Authorisations (IPCO-A) has access to each of these systems to review and authorise individual applications and all can facilitate urgent oral applications.

- 4. Grade 1 requests are made when there is an immediate risk to life. Grade 2 requests are made when there is an exceptionally urgent requirement for the prevention or detection of serious crime; a credible and immediate threat to national security; or a serious concern for the welfare of a vulnerable person where urgent provision of the communications data will have an immediate and positive impact on the investigation or operation. Grade 3 requests are made when matters that are not urgent but, where appropriate, will include specific or time-critical issues such as bail dates; court dates; where persons are in custody; or where there is a specific line of investigation into a serious crime and early disclosure by the telecommunications operator or postal operator will directly assist in the prevention or detection of that crime.**

Acknowledging the grading criteria, and the available training (referenced in my response to point 1 and 5 below), we are also in the process of developing further training for the 'CD Single Point of Contact (SPoC) community; particularly with the development of a Hydra (immersive learning) exercise around fast-time decision making in this space. We anticipate that this will be piloted in Summer 2026.

- 5. Section 5 of Codes of Practice refers to the application process and Section 6 deals with the authorisation of the application, however there is no practical guidance, such as Authorised Professional Practice Guidance, to assist Forces and their officers, as to how and when applications should be made and authorisations should be given.**

In addition to the referenced College training, in collaboration with the National Action Fraud Network, IPCO-A, HMRS and Home Office, we have produced a further training product, "Standardising Communications Data Applications," which is available on the NCDS website. Some organisations have taken the decision to mandate this training for staff.

- 6. In this case a Grade 2 application was submitted almost 24 hours after Ollie was reported missing. Once submitted, Ollie was found within 2 hours and 9 minutes. This application was submitted in writing, however evidence was given that in some circumstances a verbal application for a Grade 2 request can be made if the Grade 2 application is urgent. There is a lack of guidance to police officers nationally as to what would constitute a Grade 2 urgent application and what should be done in writing and what should be done verbally.**

The training for communications data specialists provides guidance for what constitutes the specific purposes for communications data, and the priority grading for the disclosure of the data by telecommunications operators. The training also details how quickly the IPCO-A can consider a written application regarding its authorisation. Grade 2 authorisations can be approved by IPCO at short notice during 08:00 – 22:00hrs daily. A Grade 2 application would not be processed outside of these times, so the grading could have had an impact if requested outside of their working hours. There is no guidance as to precisely when an application must be written (most are), but the communications data SPoC will act as a guardian and date keeper for applications, and for Authorising Individuals to authorise or otherwise.

- 7. I am concerned that the circumstances of Ollie's death could occur again as a result of the lack of practical guidance to Police Forces and their staff as to when and how to make data communication requests pursuant to the Investigatory Powers Act 2016.**

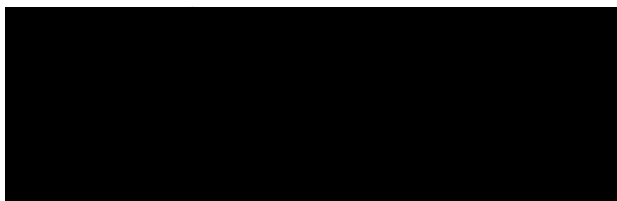
While I am not privy to any further detail of the investigation, (and cede to any new information that could cast light on the following) the concern here may be around the initial risk assessment and speed of application submission, rather than the grading or guidance. According to the IPCO Service Level Agreement, Priority two data, has a six-hour turnaround, for example.

I have tasked my team with examining where the **Missing Persons Authorised Professional Practice** could be further strengthened in this area to provide greater clarity and direction around communications data and tracking, during the current review process.

Finally, I wanted to extend my condolences to Mr Roberts family and friends and reassure you that we will continue to review where and how we can strengthen training and guidance to ensure that policing is better equipped to help vulnerable people in their times of need. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Chief Executive Officer  
College of Policing



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