

HM Senior Coroner James Bennett
His Majesty's Senior Coroner for Herefordshire
Coroner's Office
Gardner Hall
Venns Lane
Hereford
HR1 1DT

8th September 2026

Dear Senior Coroner Bennett,

Prevention of Future Deaths Report: Alan Hirst

I write on behalf of the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) in relation to paragraph 7, Schedule 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, in relation to the prevention of future deaths report sent via email to the NPCC dated 21st July 2026.

The notice sets out concerns that arose from the information received during the inquest into the death of Mr Alan Hirst. I am very sorry to read of the circumstances of Alan's death. My sympathies are with his family and friends.

I understand that the matters of concern raised are as follows:

The inability of police forces to provide 24/7, 365-day coverage of PoISA responsibilities is being impeded by:

- (1) insufficient provision of training places, and
- (2) the number of training places made available does not appear to prioritise those forces in most urgent need of PoSAs or those that cannot fulfil 24/7, 365-day coverage.

The NPCC recognises the critical role that Police Search Advisers (PoSAs) play in supporting high-risk missing person investigations and acknowledges the importance of maintaining an effective and resilient search capability across UK policing.

The NPCC has considered this concern in consultation with relevant policing stakeholders, including the College of Policing, the Police Search Governance Board (PSGB), the NPCC Search and Rescue Working Group, and the NPCC Missing People Working Group.

Role of the College of Policing and National Training Provision

The College of Policing leads the development and delivery of national PoISA training and is responsible for the provision of accredited training courses through established national processes. With the support of our NPCC working groups as outlined above, and having engaged with the College on this important matter, I am satisfied that there is sufficient training capability and capacity to meet the training needs of all forces. This includes the ability to flex to demand where required. Importantly, there

are established mechanisms through which forces can communicate emerging or urgent training needs, allowing training allocations to be adjusted and prioritised where necessary.

Local Force Responsibility and Operational Resilience

Whilst the NPCC recognises the importance of maintaining adequate PoISA capability, decisions regarding the number of PoISAs required within a force and whether arrangements are established to provide 24-hour, 365-day PoISA availability are matters for individual Chief Constables and forces to determine based upon local operational demand, risk assessments, geography, workforce planning and wider resource considerations.

Nationally, there is no mandated requirement for every police force to maintain dedicated 24/7 PoISA coverage. Rather, forces are expected to assess their local risks and ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to meet operational needs within their respective areas.

National Oversight and Governance

The Police Search Governance Board, together with the NPCC Search and Rescue Working Group and the NPCC Missing People Working Group, provide governance, coordination and oversight of national search and missing person policy and capability.

The NPCC Search and Rescue Working Group has a specific role in considering the sufficiency of national search capability, including PoISA training requirements, and works closely with the College of Policing and the Police National Search Centre to ensure that training provision remains aligned with operational demand.

Following consideration of the matters raised, the NPCC is satisfied that appropriate governance structures are in place and that there is no current evidence to indicate a national shortfall in PoISA training provision. I understand that the College are engaging with West Mercia Police directly to ensure that any current or predicted training requirements are met.

The NPCC will continue to work with the College of Policing, Chief Constables and national policing leads to monitor search capability and ensure that training provision and operational resilience remain appropriate to the risks and demands faced by policing.

Yours sincerely,



Chief Constable
Chair - National Police Chiefs' Council