



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

**RESOURCES AND
GOVERNANCE GROUP**
Law & Governance Division
Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

H.M. Coroners Office
P.O. Box 274
Stanley
County Durham
DH8 1HG

1st October 2026

Dear Sir,

Response to Prevention of Future Deaths Report

1. Coroner and Case Details

Coroner:- Dr Leslie Hamilton, Assistant Coroner for the coroner area of County Durham and Darlington

Deceased: Leonard Stuart Connell (DOB 10th April 1947)

Date of Death: 7th May 2025

Inquest Conclusion: Accident.

Date Prevention of Future Deaths Report Issued: 4th May 2026

2. Organisation Responding

Organisation Name: Darlington Borough Council

Address: Darlington Borough Council, Town Hall, Feethams, Darlington, DL1 5QT

Relevant Service: The Chief Executive

3. Summary of Coroner's Concerns

The Prevention of Future Deaths Report identified the following matters of concern:-

"Although in his case I found that the "long lie" (due to him not being connected to the Lifeline service) did not contribute to his death, I have concerns that other clients may experience problems with connection to the service (as the problem could not be explained in his case) and

so suffer a “long lie” (which usually results in muscle damage leading to release of compounds into the blood stream which in turn leads to acute kidney injury and increased risk of mortality) which may contribute to their death.

There had been a previous incident on 28th October 2025, where Lifeline were aware of a fault with his equipment but failed to act upon it - this was a ‘missed opportunity’.”

4. Action Taken or Proposed in Response to the Coroner’s Concerns

The Council takes the coroner’s concerns extremely seriously. The following actions have been taken and/or are planned to address the concern:

The Council has in place an action plan to address the concerns raised by the deceased’s family via the Council’s Complaints Process. The concerns raised by the Coroner are of a similar nature to those raised by the family and which were also the focus of the Council’s internal investigation. There has been a thorough investigation of the situation which involved gathering all the information; working with providers and partners; reviewing the Council’s current processes and procedures; considering external factors and looking at staff knowledge, training and understanding. During and as a result of the investigation, the Council formulated an Action Plan and actions have been completed or remain ongoing due to the nature of the action item [i.e. training]. These actions have included but not limited to

- Development of tools to help DBC to assess all staff skill levels, particularly around Telecare/use of Pulse (implementation of the Induction/Quality Assurance framework) which will enable us to target training;
- Request for further staff training in the use of Pulse from Legrand to be arranged as incremental refreshers and at induction points;
- Development of processes that instruct staff:
 1. Cancellation-to include returning every unit to default settings/clearing all notes
 2. ‘No contact to Portals’ with timescales for reviewing/actioning these
 3. Actions to take and when, for other portal notifications i.e. battery low, accumulator low, mains failure
- Letters delivered to every Lifeline customer to include those with scheme equipment, to encourage ‘monthly test calls’;
- 6 weekly social media posts to encourage monthly test calls posted to the Facebook Housing pages;
- Development of reports that identify the most vulnerable clients who are not test calling;
- Automated reports and a call back process have been developed to identify high risk users and ensure equipment is in working order;
- Introduction of a framework that adjusts monitoring levels according to client vulnerability, age, and dependency on the Lifeline service;
- Development of FAQ’s to be circulated to all clients and partners on completion – this is a more comprehensive information booklet for clients to refer to.
- Acceleration of 2G-4G upgrades with additional resources being brought in where we can to meet these demands;
- Development of an induction checklist/quality assurance document that will ensure that such issues are picked up at: 1:1’s, debriefs and via ongoing training
- Prompts to staff to remind users of making test calls at every contact.

A debriefing session with relevant officers has taken place earlier this year as a result of this case. The debriefing session offered the Lifeline team learning and actions following the serious incident.

5. How these Actions will Reduce the Risk of Future Deaths

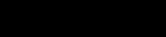
These actions outlined above aim to strengthen and raise awareness of the process for those residents who use the Lifeline Service as well as the introduction of new measures to monitor and identify vulnerable users and respond in a timely manner. This awareness will be raised both internally and with external stakeholders and residents and their families. It is anticipated that such actions will improve the level of service, response times and avoid there being missed opportunities. These actions, we anticipate, will reduce the risk of potentially avoidable deaths in similar circumstances.

6. Ongoing Monitoring and review

Progress against this action will be reviewed by the Council, and any deficiencies will be addressed promptly. Learning from this case will also be shared through briefings within relevant departments and staff will be prompted to remind residents to undertake test calls when in contact with those residents. Some of the actions identified from this incident will remain ongoing and progress updated, for example the Council will continue developing its digital contingency plan during the progression of the digital switchover.

7. Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this response is accurate to the best of my knowledge and that the actions described have been, or will be, implemented as stated.

Name: 

Job Title: **Chief Executive**

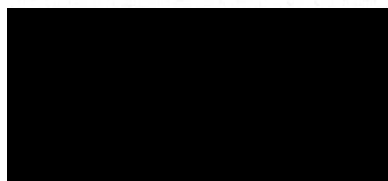
Organisation: **Darlington Borough Council**

Date: **1st October 2026**

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely apologise for the delay in preparing this response and missing the extended deadline granted. No disrespect or discourtesy was intended. The delay is being addressed internally. I am assured that the steps taken by the Council to date were done so in a timely manner and this response delay has not had any impact on the actions we have taken to date. We take our duties towards the residents of Darlington and their safety extremely seriously.

Should the Council be able to assist any further please do not hesitate to contact myself where I will endeavour to assist wherever possible.

Yours sincerely



Chief Executive