RESPONSE TO A REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS
REGULATION 29 OF THE CORONERS (INVESTIGATIONS) REGULATIONS 2013

Please do not include any living persons' names in this document, in accordance with the Chief Coroner's PFD Publication Policy (2026).

THIS RESPONSE IS BEING SENT TO:

The Senior Coroner, Emma WHITTING, for the Coroner Area Bedfordshire & Luton in response to a '**REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATH REGULATION 28'** following an investigation into the death of **Sarah Marie ALBONE.**

1.	**RESPONDENT** In line with our duty under Regulation 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013, **The Chief Constable, [redacted] of Bedfordshire Police,** provides this response.
2.	**DATE OF RESPONSE** 9 November 2026
3.	**CONFIRMATION OF CORONER'S MATTERS OF CONCERN** 1) The new statutory framework for disclosure of relevant information to victims by Police provided by 'Clare's Law-Right to Ask' is not being properly applied by Bedfordshire Police as they appear to be under a misunderstanding (as evidenced in an e-mail sent by their Head of Legal sent in response to this concern) that, when considering any relevant disclosure, officers are bound by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and the Data Protection Act; whereas 'Clare's Law' relies on the Police's common law power to disclose information where necessary to prevent crime based on an assessment of risk. 2) Bedfordshire Police are not disclosing DARA/DASH assessments relating to a victim under MARAC even though all other agencies routinely provide their own. Again in the e-mail sent by their Head of Legal in response to this concern, it is suggested that they would not be relevant since they are just "snapshots taken on the day the victim is spoken to and can be quickly out of date by the time of the MARAC meeting"; however, in not considering and providing these, there is a risk that not only Police but all multi-agency partners could again overlook the cumulative nature of domestic harm and patterns of domestic abuse highlighted by the DHR in this Inquest.

4.	**DETAILS OF ACTION TAKEN** Bedfordshire Police acknowledges receipt of the Prevention of Future Deaths (“PFD”) Report issued by the Senior Coroner for Bedfordshire and Luton, dated 14 September 2026, following the inquest into the death of Ms Sarah Albone. The tragic circumstances in which Ms Albone came to her death are recognised by the force and Bedfordshire Police extends its sincere condolences to Ms Albone’s family and friends. The concerns identified within the PFD have been carefully considered and the response of Bedfordshire Police is set out below. **Response to Concern 1: Application of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ("DVDS”)** Bedfordshire Police fully recognises the importance of the DVDS as a safeguarding tool intended to protect individuals who may be at risk of domestic abuse. The PFD report expresses concern that Bedfordshire Police did not appreciate the existence and application of the common law power of disclosure when considering a DVDS application. This concern has been carefully considered. Whilst Bedfordshire Police fully acknowledges the importance of information sharing to protect those at risk of harm, it does not accept that its understanding of the legal framework governing the DVDS was inconsistent with the relevant statutory guidance. The statutory guidance provides that the DVDS is the framework through which police forces exercise their common law powers of disclosure. Any disclosure decision must be based upon an assessment of necessity, proportionality and lawfulness in the particular circumstances of each case. The existence of relevant information does not, in itself, require disclosure. Bedfordshire Police therefore maintains that disclosure decisions must balance safeguarding considerations against the rights of the individual who is the subject of the proposed disclosure. The force is concerned that any approach which creates an expectation of disclosure solely because relevant information exists risks undermining the necessity and proportionality assessments required by law. However, we continually work to review our practices by: • Reviewing the force DVDS policy against current Statutory Guidance and College of Policing principles. • Providing refresher training for officers and staff involved in DVDS decision-making, with emphasis on safeguarding, necessity, proportionality and recording the rationale for decisions.

- Ensuring continual quality assurance and supervisory oversight of DVDS applications to ensure compliance with policy and guidance.

Response to Concern 2: Provision of DARA/DASH Information to MARAC

Bedfordshire Police recognises the importance of effective information sharing within current MARAC arrangements to identify cumulative harm, patterns of abusive behaviour and escalating risk. It is accepted that historical DARA/DASH assessments can provide valuable context and should be considered alongside police records and information held by partner agencies.

In practice, where Bedfordshire Police makes a MARAC referral, the relevant DARA/DASH assessment is attached to the referral. Where a referral is made by another agency, Bedfordshire Police provides a detailed information summary to support the MARAC process. This summary includes relevant information from police systems, including the Athena record, current police involvement, investigating officer details, relevant incident history, PNC information relating to the victim and suspect, victim engagement information, significant warning markers, DVDS considerations and other relevant Athena markers.

Bedfordshire Police considers that the fact a case has been referred to MARAC demonstrates that the individual has been assessed as being at significant risk of harm. The force's approach is therefore to ensure that the key information required to understand risk, vulnerability, offending behaviour and safeguarding needs is contained within the referral material provided to MARAC partners, rather than requiring reliance upon information contained in separate documents. This information is intended to enable partner agencies to identify cumulative harm, patterns of abuse and escalating risk when considering safeguarding interventions.

To strengthen information sharing within the MARAC process, Bedfordshire Police has:

- Reviewed existing MARAC processes to ensure relevant risk assessments are considered and shared where appropriate.
- Reviewed operational guidance to clarify responsibilities for identifying, collating and sharing relevant information.
- Updated guidance and learning to reinforce consideration of cumulative harm, coercive and controlling behaviour, repeat victimisation and wider patterns of offending.

	These measures are intended to further support effective multi-agency safeguarding and ensure relevant information is available to inform risk management and safeguarding decisions. **Conclusion** Bedfordshire Police takes domestic abuse extremely seriously and remains committed to protecting and safeguarding victims. The force recognise the devastating impact domestic abuse can have on victims, their families and communities and remain committed to tackling male violence against women and girls, which is a force priority and a key part of our Control Strategy. Whilst Bedfordshire Police respectfully maintains that its understanding and application of the DVDS was consistent with the statutory guidance in force at the relevant time, the concerns raised by the Coroner provide a valuable opportunity to continually review and strengthen existing policies, procedures and governance arrangements.
5.	**DETAILS OF FURTHER ACTION PROPOSED** Bedfordshire Police will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the measures outlined above through established governance, audit and quality assurance processes.
6.	**SIGNATURE**  Detective Chief Superintendent [redacted] on behalf of The Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police.