

**CUMBRIA POLICE AUTHORITY
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

26 JANUARY 2005

Agenda Item No.

HOME OFFICE PUBLICATION “DEATHS DURING OR FOLLOWING POLICE CONTACT”

A position report by the Professional Standards Department

1. The previous meeting of 20 October 2004 requested a report outlining our position in relation to the above publication. The Home Office report covers the period April 2003 to March 2004 and contains statistics and details of cases relating to Deaths during or following Police contact. Cumbria features twice within the report as follows: -

i) Table 1 Fatal Road Traffic Incidents involving the Police

Death of Mr Alan BLAYLOCK on 1 February 2004 on the M6 motorway near Carlisle (see separate report and agenda item).

ii) Table 5 Inquest Verdicts awaited

Death of Mr Colin GRANTHAM on 2 February 2002. Mr GRANTHAM was arrested in connection with the death of his wife and took his own life after being released from custody. An investigation was conducted under the supervision of the PCA (now IPCC). An inquest was held during March 2004 which delivered a suicide verdict and concluded that the Police did all they could to manage the risk of this happening. The IPCC decision was that no action should be taken against any Officer (reported at last meeting of 20 October 2004).

2. So far this year, from 1 April 2004, there have been 3 deaths following police contact as follows: -

- i) Mr Nigel HUNTER during June 2004 at Kendal
- ii) Mr Brian ROW during August 2004 at Appleby
- iii) Mr Howard SHILTON during November 2004 at Whitehaven

All three men were under investigation and on bail for sexual offences or on-line child abuse. A formal process for risk management of this high-risk group has been developed and will be shortly taken to the Operations Management Board for approval. Although a detainee or suspect may have a propensity to self-harm, this does not necessarily mean they are mentally ill and the use of powers under the Mental Health Act are often neither available nor appropriate.

3. Appendix B of the "Report" outlines Home Office initiatives to reduce the risk of deaths in police custody, the position within Cumbria is as follows: -

Organisation of police custody suites

An action plan has been created to address the points raised in this section. This is being monitored through the force custody forum. The only major issue of concern is the need for Areas to ensure their health and safety risk assessments are up to date and this has still to be completed.

All cells have recently been searched and audited for ligature points by qualified Police Search Advisers; some minor (but important) repairs were identified as needed in some areas.

Headquarters CJU is representing the Constabulary at the regional custody forum. The first meeting is to be held at Preston on 13th December 2004.

Duty of care/equal treatment

The custody records were redesigned as a result of the circular 32/2000 to ensure the risk assessment meet the minimum standards. The force is introducing the Custody and Case NSPIS system early next year, which is fully compatible with the risk assessment process and PACE.

Discussion has recently taken place with Social Services with regard to the appropriate adult service they provide. Whilst it is currently adequate for our needs they do have some concerns as to the long-term sustainability of the service. They are currently examining their own structure and processes to meet the demand. We have been in contact with National Appropriate Adult Network and are aware of the service they can offer.

The police project leader on the ACPO/NCPE project to develop guidance on the "Safer Handling and Detention of Persons in Police Custody" is to attend the in force custody conference on the 27th January 2005. As many custody staff will attend this conference as possible. We will examine the national and local position in respect of custody issues. We will then go one to identify any areas for development and devise a way forward.

Monitoring Systems

The police authority has recently introduced a new lay visitors scheme for custody suites and North Cumbria following a near miss when a detainee

appeared to cease breathing, are exploring the feasibility of electronic life signs monitoring equipment.

Healthcare issues

A drug swallowing policy is being developed which will basically mean that any detainee suspected of having swallowed drugs, will be treated as a medical emergency. The provision of Force Medical Examiner (FME) services to all four custody sites has been reviewed and improvements made to availability of services and the physical environment. Closer links have been developed between FME's and mental health professionals, each Area has a mental health co-ordinator and approved FMEs under section 12 Mental Health Act (admission for assessment).

Occupational standards/training

It was identified that the training we gave to custody staff needed updating and this formed part of the deaths in custody action plan. The training course has been completely re written and has been well received by those who have attended. A separate course is now in the process of being devised for detention officers.

Professional Standards Department