



**AVON &  
SOMERSET**  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER

***'HOMICIDE PREVENTION – AN INSPECTION OF THE POLICE CONTRIBUTION TO THE  
PREVENTION OF HOMICIDE'***

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AVON & SOMERSET PCC RESPONSE DATED 6TH OCTOBER 2023**

Preventing crime is the overarching theme of my Police and Crime Plan. Preventing homicide has to be the priority and protecting life is the core duty of the police.

Avon and Somerset has a lower rate of homicides than the national average but even one homicide is one homicide too many.

I welcome the recommendations from this report, of which there are two for Chief Constables. These are set out below with the initial response to these after each of them.

It should be noted that I have a legal duty to respond to inspection reports within eight weeks of their publication. However, you will see the Constabulary have many more months to fully complete these recommendations: that's why the responses are still a work in progress. With the support of my office, I oversee recommendations from the inspectorate on a continual basis to help ensure they are completed and will see the results of the audits mentioned.

## Recommendation 2

By 31 August 2024, chief constables in England and Wales should devise an approach to make sure their force can, on a sufficiently frequent basis, produce an analytical report concerning its death investigations. This will help the force to:

- better understand the pattern of death reports across the force area, drawing on force data and information gathered by other organisations, including the NHS and local authorities; and
- identify any linked series of death reports.

## Response

The Constabulary produced a problem profile in January 2023. This analysed three years of homicides and 'near miss' homicides considering things like time and place of offences, modus operandi, influencing factors, use of weapons and victim and suspect profiles. This report also provided a number of local recommendations which will be progressed.

Homicides in Avon and Somerset are investigated by the Major Crime Investigation Team (MCIT). MCIT are currently looking into how they can provide similar analysis on an ongoing basis. However MCIT has established a monthly Continuous Improvement Meeting which discusses a range of data to identify emerging trends as to areas for improvement and good practice.

The report highlights police failings in the handling of the [Stephen Port Murders](#). The Constabulary Sudden Death Attendance Policy states that police will attend the following sudden death incidents:

- The death is suspicious or out of the ordinary
- Presence of unexplained injuries
- Suicide is suspected
- The death was due to suspected drug abuse or misuse
- The death occurred away from the deceased's home address
- Unexpected death of a person under 50yrs with no known terminal illness

These cover the circumstances in which Stephen Port's victims were.

Where police attend to reports of any sudden death, they must apply an investigative mindset. Force guidance is that the initial response at the scene of a sudden death should be prompt and controlled. The scene should not be disturbed until the full facts surrounding the death have been established, in order to ensure that evidence is preserved in the eventuality that it is decided the circumstances are suspicious and a full forensic scene examination is required. These standards allow an element of overview and enable the deployment of specialist resources, where appropriate.

### Recommendation 3

By 1 December 2023, chief constables should make sure their force can quickly identify lessons from homicides and serious violence incidents. The process should be capable of involving partner organisations when appropriate, so that lessons can be learned more widely.

### Response

The Constabulary have a process to ensure the completion of Initial Learning Reviews for organisational learning. This process has the flexibility to engage partner agencies when relevant engagement or learning is identified in the early investigation of the incident. This process is currently being led by staff from the Major Statutory Crime Review Team. It has been trialled on one homicide and demonstrated its effectiveness at meeting the recommendation objectives. A review is currently being conducted to assess the resourcing implications of formalising this process into daily business.

In the absence of a formal Initial Learning Review process being instigated, MCIT routinely identify learning/prevention opportunities during the early stages of a homicide investigations.

MCIT also have a formal End of Operation Policy which, at conclusion of a homicide investigation, a number of steps need to be completed. This includes a formal debrief of the investigation – involving internal and external stakeholders – to capture learning which is then used and shared to inform future investigative planning/approaches.

The themes from both these recommendations are also captured in the Strategic Homicide Suppression Plan.

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