

Police Scotland submission of 16 June 2023

PE1948/D: PE1948: Improve the way that unexplained deaths are dealt with

I write in reply to your email to Police Scotland dated 4 May 2023, seeking information on a number of points raised at the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in relation to petition PE1948: Improve the way that unexplained deaths are dealt with.

- 1. How many complaints Police Scotland has received about the way it has investigated unexplained deaths in the past 5 years; of those, how many were upheld; and of the complaints upheld, what the main failings identified were.**

At this time the Professional Standards Department (PSD) database cannot be filtered to identify specific complaints relating to the Investigation of Unexplained Deaths. Complaints are recorded as per agreed categories, and this specific set of circumstances detailed by the Committee would be recorded under Quality of Service or Irregularity in Procedure categories. Identifying relevant complaints would involve a manual review of thousands of files in these categories, which has not been practically feasible.

PSD can however report that PSD Investigations (West) maintain an additional index of complaints covering these circumstances in the West command area only. This confirms that from April 2021 to current date, PSD West recorded 13 complaints relating to deaths, either unexplained or suicide. Further analysis into the circumstances of these has revealed that allegations involved a combination of dissatisfaction with the death investigation, disputing the cause of death (particularly suicide or drugs deaths) and police notification to next of kin (either time taken to notify or disputing who was deemed to be the appropriate next of kin). Of these, only one complaint (relating to the matter presented to CPPP) was referred to PIRC for a Complaint Handling Review.

I appreciate this only partially informs the request received, however I can further advise that future upgrades to the PSD database which are currently being progressed, the newly implemented National Complaint Investigation Model, and potential further analytical support for PSD aims to improve our future recording and analysis

capabilities, consistency across the nation and understanding of a wider range of themes, including these particular circumstances

2. When Police Scotland expects to complete its review of the Investigation of Death National Guidance, and what steps it plans to take to ensure the updated Guidance is fully implemented.

Having reviewed the PIRC report in relation to the death of Rhys Bonner, no recommendations were made in relation to the Investigation of Death National Guidance. The Investigation of Death National Guidance is regularly reviewed and updated, often due to specific matters being highlighted through various means. As with any changes made to the guidance, these are highlighted across the organisation by the publishing of internal Police Scotland memos, and via national, and divisional electronic transmissions and/or by face to face briefings by line managers.

The guidance is currently sitting with senior management for review prior to consultation.