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Police Investigations &
Review Commissioner

18 April 2019

PIRC Investigation Findings

Death of 37-year-old male
10 October 2018
Glasgow

BACKGROUND

At 1805 hours on Wednesday 10 October 2018, a 37-year-old man was found dead in a bedroom of his home in Glasgow. Police officers had forced entry following concerns raised about the man by care staff.

Following a post mortem examination and toxicology analysis, the cause of his death was established as drug intoxication.

The man, who suffered from schizophrenia, lived a chaotic lifestyle and abused controlled drugs. He was subject to twice daily monitoring and care by a Care Provider and weekly treatment by a Community Psychiatric Nurse.

The man had been reported to Police Scotland as a missing person on 22 occasions between July 2015 and July 2018. However, he was always found by police or returned of his own volition within one to six hours.

The Care Provider's missing person policy outlined that care staff should report the man as missing if he had not been seen within a 24 hour period. Prior to reporting him missing, care staff made efforts to trace the deceased.

At 1714 hours on Tuesday 9 October 2018 care staff reported the man as missing to Police as he had not been seen since 1700 hours the previous day. A Sergeant dealt with the report. He established that the man had been at London Road police station at 1900 hours the previous day and spoken to a police officer about some concerns.

The Sergeant was also informed by a Constable that he had been told by a member of the concierge staff that the man had been seen at around 0200 to 0400 hours on 9 October 2018 wandering about the block of flats he stayed in. The Constable did not note the details of the member of staff who he spoke to and when he returned a few days later was unable to trace the person who provided that information. The Sergeant also discussed the matter with an Inspector but the Inspector did not check with the Sergeant whether police officers had gone to the deceased's flat, in an effort to trace the man. The Sergeant decided that the man did not fit Police Scotland's criteria of a missing person and instructed that no further action be taken.

On Wednesday 10 October 2018 when care staff visited the man's house at 1100 and 1300 hours, they still could not trace him or get access to his house. At 1420 hours care staff again reported the man as missing and indicated heightened concerns for his wellbeing.

The same Sergeant also dealt with this report and told care staff he would instruct police officers to go to the man's house as soon as they were available. At 1600 hours officers attended the man's home and on being unable to find him, sought assistance to gain entry to the house. At 1805 hours entry was gained and the man was found dead in a bedroom. The man was pronounced dead by paramedic staff at 1859 hours

REFERRAL TO THE PIRC

On 15 October 2018, Police Scotland referred the incident to the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) in terms of Section 33A(c) of the Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2006 as amended and the Police Investigations and Review

Commissioner (Investigations Procedure, Serious Incidents and Specified Weapons) Regulations 2013 for consideration of investigation.

PIRC INVESTIGATION

The PIRC investigation focussed on the police actions in relation to the two missing person reports made by care staff.

During the course of the investigation, PIRC investigators obtained statements from and interviewed relevant police officers and civilians. They also seized and examined Command and Control incident logs, telephone recordings, concern reports and Standard Operating Procedures/guidance documents.

PIRC FINDINGS

- The deceased died from drug intoxication between 1900 hours on 8 October 2018 and 1805 hours on 10 October 2018.
- The deceased had a history of mental ill health and drug addiction issues.
- Care staff first reported the deceased as a missing person to Police Scotland at 1714 hours on 9 October 2018.
- A Police Sergeant took ownership of this missing person report and made initial enquiries. He concluded that the circumstances did not meet Police Scotland's criteria for a missing person investigation at that time.
- At 1817 hours on 9 October 2018 the Police Sergeant instructed ACR (Area Control Room) staff not to send anyone to the incident, to recode the incident and close it.
- The Police Sergeant should have instructed officers to go to the deceased's flat at the time of this first missing person report, to make enquiries and attempt to trace the deceased.
- A Police Inspector did not check that all appropriate steps had been taken before agreeing with the Police Sergeant's decision to take no further action.
- Care staff reported the deceased on a second occasion as a missing person to Police Scotland at 1420 hours on 10 October 2018, indicating heightened concern for his wellbeing. The same Police Sergeant took ownership of this second missing person report.

- At 1432 hours on 10 October 2018 the Sergeant instructed officers to attend at the deceased's flat to make enquiries in an attempt to trace him and ensure his wellbeing
- After forcing entry to the deceased's flat at 1805 hours on 10 October 2018, police officers discovered the deceased dead inside.
- It is not possible to determine whether if the police had attended and searched the deceased's flat on 9 October 2018 that his death could have been prevented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commissioner recommends that Police Scotland:

- Ensures that all police officers and in particular the Police Sergeant receives appropriate training/guidance in assessing missing person reports.
- Ensures that the Police Inspector is reminded of the importance of checking that all appropriate steps have been taken before agreeing with a course of action.
- Ensures that the Police Constable who spoke to concierge staff is reminded of the necessity to note personal details of those from whom he obtains information during enquiries.
- Report to the Commissioner within 3 months of the date of issue of this report on action taken to implement the above recommendations.