The logo consists of a dark purple square with the words "SHEKU", "BAYOH", and "INQUIRY" stacked vertically in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

The Sheku Bayoh Public Inquiry

Witness Statement

Steven Bisset

Taken by 

On MS Teams

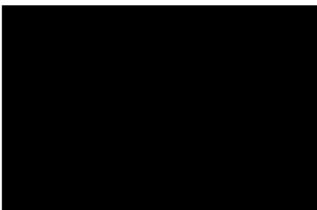
on Monday 31 October 2022

Witness details

1. My full name is Steven Bisset. My date of birth is in 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. On 3 May 2015, I was a supervising Sergeant in the Bilston Glen Area Control Room (ACR). I retired from the police force on 12 May 2022, having completed 27.5 years of service.

Area Control Room Sergeant

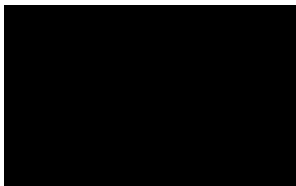
3. In my role as a Sergeant in the Control Room, I managed a team of police controllers consisting of police officers and police staff, who handled the command and control of police incidents within a geographical area.
4. On 3 May 2015, I was supervising the P Division, and I supervised the response to incidents to ensure that they were proportionate and made the best use of

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divisional and specialist resources. P Division had 6 radio channels covering the 6 different Fife areas. There was: Dunfermline; Cowdenbeath; Glenrothes; Kirkcaldy; Northeast Fife; and then the last area covered St Andrews and Leuchars. Eventually after a short period of time, the St Andrews/Leuchars channel was merged with Northeast Fife and the P Division dropped to 5 radio channels. I can't remember if this happened before or after 3 May 2015.

5. I would listen to the 6 radio channels that were being monitored by the controllers on my headset. As well as the local channels, I would monitor the roaming channel. This was used by specialist resources such as dog handlers, who would cover a whole division. It was really to monitor and make sure that the level of response that they were dispatching was appropriate, and also to make sure that they're using specialist resources if required. You can't start jumping in and out of every channel or you'd just lose complete control. All you're really doing is trying to monitor each of these incidents and making sure there's resources going. If we had an incident where we've got no officers free to attend, myself and the controllers would look and see who we could divert from another incident to something more critical. I would do things like make sure the dog handlers go, and make sure traffic officers are going (if for example it was a road traffic collision incident). I would speak to Overview on the phone if required, but every decision and rationale was recorded the STORM log anyway.

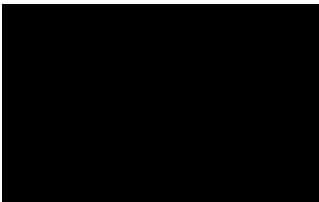
6. If a controller required something urgent, they would shout out to me, or they would shout out to the Control Room floor. They would say, "I need the fire service. I need an ambulance," and someone would say, "I'll phone for you.". If nobody had been dispatched to an incident and the incident was becoming more time critical, then the Inspector would put a line on saying, "Can we please get officers dispatched to this as soon as possible.". I would just chase up the controllers. I would say, "Who have we got free? Why is there nobody at that?". The response might be, "They're all dealing with other incidents, they're all committed.". I would check, "Is there anyone else nearby that can go?". The controller might respond, "No.". I would

Signature of witness..... 

suggest, "What about the local Sergeant? Can he go?". I might receive the response, "He's already involved.". You'd maybe sometimes have to wait until you could get somebody freed up.

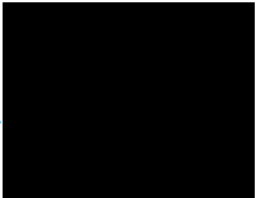
7. In terms of allocating specialist resources, the only resource the controllers or Sergeants can't approve for dispatch are the firearms officers. That has to be the on-duty Inspector as the Initial Firearms Tactical Commander (ITFC). However, controllers and Sergeants would routinely ask the Overview Inspector for permission to send firearms officers to non-firearms related incidents. An example for that would be if we had a high-risk missing person, you would dispatch firearms officers to go and carry out a search of the area. If a firearms incident came in, they could be freed up immediately. The attendance of firearms officers provide extra eyes on the ground. If a firearms officer found that person, they could hand them over to the other uniformed officers at the scene.

8. A controller can regrade an incident to a higher grade without permission. However if a controller wanted to downgrade an incident, they have to get permission from a Sergeant. The incident might come through from the Service Centre as a Grade 1. An example would be a male kicking a door. The call received from the member of the public to the Service Centre call handler would say, "That's a male kicking a door. He's trying to get into the house". So the STORM log would receive a Grade 1 grading from the call handler when it is passed through to the controller in the Control Room. Then the next call received from the public says, "that's the male left and he's running down the street.". So the controller would say to me, "Can I downgrade that?". I would respond, "Yes, downgrade it to Grade 2. We still need somebody there in case he returns, however, at the moment, the person inside is safe and well.".

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Training

9. I don't think I received any training specific to the role of Sergeant in the Control Room. I think the training applied to any police officer who was joining the Control Room.
10. We received training on each of the four divisions that we would be covering. That was 'P' which was Fife; 'C' which was Central Scotland; 'E' which was Edinburgh; 'J' which was Lothian and Borders. You were made familiar with the key sites and landmarks within each of the areas. I also received 'Vehicle Pursuit Training'. I can't remember whether I received this at the same time as my other introductory training to the ACR or afterwards. The training concerned how to manage a vehicle pursuit, so where a vehicle was making off from police officers.
11. We got training on the Command and Control (STORM) system on how to accept and how to manage calls as they came in, how to transfer them, how to update them, close them and regrade them. So there was the IT side i.e. how to use the systems, and then there was the process side i.e. what incidents went where and how to manage, close, regrade and update them.
12. I did receive equality and diversity training, about 15 years ago, maybe longer. You get your Officer Safety Training yearly. You didn't get equality and diversity training yearly. I think it was a one-off. I can't remember receiving any refresher training. Whilst I received only 1 formal training session, equality and diversity was ingrained in everything that staff did within the force. When you applied for a new post, one of the categories that you may be questioned on in the interview is equality and diversity. You would have to give examples of how you have perhaps dealt with equality and diversity within your role. All staff were aware of Police Scotland's values to treat everyone with integrity, fairness and respect. This was reinforced by log-on screens which displayed the message on staff computers. The message

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was also displayed on posters within all police buildings and electronic screens within the ACR.

Recall of Events on 3 May 2015

13. The incident was around 7.5 years ago, and this is the first time I've ever been asked to discuss it. I've never written anything down. Some of the information that I know about the incident is through my own recollection. However other pieces of information I have since found out about through my assistance to Operation Tarn and what I have seen in the media.

14. Around 2 years ago, I was asked as part of Operation Tarn to identify who had been working in the Bilston Area Control Room and Overview on 3 May 2015, and to contact them to make sure they didn't dispose of any notebooks or emails for the Inquiry. I think I got a phone call or an email from one of my line managers saying there were concerns that, due to the passage of time, notebooks or emails or other correspondence may be lost. Since at that point the incident had occurred 5 years prior, there was a concern that the notebooks or pocketbooks might be lost or destroyed. It was only then, that I realised who was working in what roles within the Control Room and Overview suite, because I couldn't recall it.

15. I have been asked which members of staff I was asked to speak to. I think it would just be Inspector Steven Stewart, Sergeant Scott Dagleish, PC [REDACTED] and police staff Michelle Hutchison. I had to collate a list of the officers, and I had to email Operation Tarn with who it was that I'd notified about not disposing of notebooks and emails. A lot of them had retired and moved on from the Control Room.

16. I have been asked if I ever recorded my thoughts anywhere in writing, such as a notebook. I never did and never would for STORM incidents in my role as an ACR Sergeant. I was in Bilston for about 6.5 years, and I was down in the Control Room

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centre managing incidents as an ACR Sergeant for about 2-3 of those years. If you were making a decision or if you were managing an incident, it all went on the STORM log. You dealt with hundreds of incidents a day, and whilst I appreciate that this turned out to be a significant incident, at the time you wouldn't have had the time to keep writing notes in a notebook for every incident that may have turned into something. There was just never the time and you were never called to do it. I did however use my notebook to record other issues that I dealt with during my shift, such as staffing and welfare issues.

17. I have been asked if there was ever a 'lessons learned' reflection performed for Mr Bayoh's incident. I can't recall a debrief for lessons learned as it's my understanding that there was no criticism of the police Control Room. We were there primarily to manage all live incidents and to dispatch an appropriate level of police response in a suitable time. I think that was done at that incident. Anyone can raise a 'notable incident' and that incident would be reviewed by a manager, Sergeant, Supervisor, Inspector. They would review that incident and see if there was any lessons that could be learned, either individual lessons or organisational learning from the incident. My recollection was that there was never any criticism pointed at the resources that were dispatched or the time it took for resources to be dispatched to that incident.

3 May 2015 - Incident

18. By 3 May 2015, I had been a Control Room Sergeant for about 12 weeks. I remember that my shift that morning, started at 07:00. I was no sooner on duty when the Duty Officer, who was in the Overview upstairs, phoned downstairs and said that the night shift had left a mess in the kitchen and he wanted one of the day shift officers to go up and clear it up. The Duty Officer that day was Inspector Steven Stewart. I couldn't recall that the Inspector on duty was Steven Stewart. I know this having assisted Operation Tarn in 2020. I know that Inspector Stewart was covering for our own Inspector, [REDACTED], who was off on leave.

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19. I have been asked to consider Inspector Stewart's Inquiry Statement¹ at paragraph 15. Inspector Stewart states that he was not in Overview at the time that the initial calls came in and he thinks he was down on the Control Room floor amongst the controllers and Service Centre staff. I thought I received a phone call or someone had a phone call from him about the mess in the kitchen, but that would mean he was in Overview when the call was made. He has maybe phoned me and then came down to the Control Room or it's possible that he's been down and said to me face to face or somebody else face to face, "Have you seen the mess that our kitchen has been left in?". I thought it was a phone call from the Inspector but the message could have been delivered in person.

20. It was the start of my shift, at about 07:00 on a Sunday morning, and at that time there was absolute minimal, if any, incidents on the screen. There were none that were urgent or that needed any real attention. Rather than ask somebody else to go and do it, I said "I'll just go and do it myself." I then went upstairs to clean the kitchen. I can't remember the specific time I left the Control Room floor.

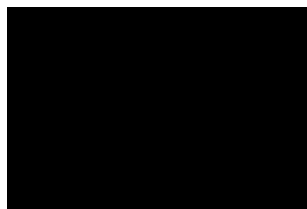
21. When I returned to the Control Room, I remember someone saying to me that a male had been arrested following calls regarding a male with a knife, and officers had attended and had arrested him. I was also informed that they had called 2 ambulances because a police officer had been assaulted and the suspect had taken unwell. I can't imagine that I was away from my desk for long, but it seemed to all be about over in that time.

22. I have been shown the incident STORM log² where I can see an entry at 07:26:37. It confirms that the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) had been contacted and 2 ambulances were attending. The entry was placed there by 'SUPV_E03' with caller number [REDACTED] This was my caller number. I have likely added this entry to the

¹ SBPI-00084

² PS00232

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STORM log after being made aware of the calling of the two ambulances upon my return to my desk.

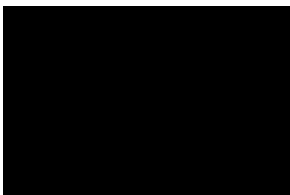
23. The incident happened really fast and what's all going on in the background is not always captured on an airwave channel or on the STORM log. There are conversations that take place on the Control Room floor between staff during every incident that are not captured on STORM.

3 May 2015 – Post Incident Involvement

24. I can see from the STORM log that at 08:02:12, I updated the log to confirm that Traffic Scotland and Inrix have been made aware of the road closures and that the public will be alerted. Inrix are a data services company that provide services to Traffic Scotland. I have added this to the STORM log based on a discussion with Overview's Research and Intelligence Desk (RAID) officer [REDACTED]. Looking to the STORM log, [REDACTED] has also added an entry at 08:01:17 regarding my contact with Traffic Scotland.

25. I've not got much recollection after that. I can remember at some stage in the day, the Inspector was looking for updates from the Fife officers, and I asked the controllers, "Can we get updates about Fife?". Whoever it was that was dealing with it never gave us much of an update at the time. I think it was that they were still dealing with it, meaning the incident is still ongoing. Again, I can't remember this verbatim, but something like, "We'll get back to you once we've dealt with it or we've got a further update". Something along those lines.

26. I know it turned into a significant incident, but from a Control Room perspective it was over in minutes. We just manage dispatching the officers to the scene. We're in command and control of that. Once officers arrive at the locus, they're in charge of that incident, and we pretty much move onto the next incident.

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27. On some shifts I could be overseeing 200 incidents. I was the Control Room Sergeant and I couldn't become too focused on how they were dealing with that incident on the street. It was for the senior officer on the street to manage it, not us. We managed their resources to get there, and that was it.

28. I have been asked when I found out that Mr Bayoh had passed away. I can't remember if it was the same day or the next day. Somebody did tell me but I can't remember when or how they told me. I can't remember who told me either.

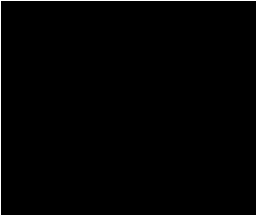
Resources Dispatched to Incident

29. Unarmed officers are routinely sent to knife calls. There's a public expectation that police officers are going to protect them.

30. Police officers get their officer safety training, they wear stab-resistance vests. They've got personal protection equipment: the batons, the CS or the PAVA spray, their handcuffs. The expectation is that these officers will protect the public. So if unarmed officers are the closest resource, these officers will be dispatched to the locus.

31. I have been asked about the fact that there were numerous calls received for the incident, and whether this could have prompted a different deployment response. No it wouldn't have. The number of calls received may assist with gathering information about the incident, and the deployment response may develop depending on the information that is being gathered.

32. If the first officers get there and the male stands in the street and makes a threat to harm himself or harm others or approaches the officers and presents a knife, the officers may decide to "back off", create space and negotiate from a safe distance. The ACR are just dispatching officers to try really identify where the male is and

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then dispatched officers make that decision once they get there: are they going to approach him and try and apprehend him based on what they're presented with?

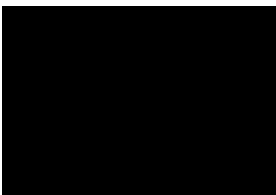
33. Depending on the type of weapon that the suspect has in their possession and what their perceived threat is, it could be declared a firearms incident. Firearms officers could be deployed to try and control the suspect. However, firearms are not routinely deployed to every knife call.

34. Every incident is different and it's up to the officers at the scene to assess what is in front of them and whether or not they think it's safe to approach that suspect. There's still a public expectation that if a person has a knife in their possession, you can't just stand back and do nothing. You have to do something. The officers have to go and engage with the suspect. That engagement could be verbal, or it could end up physical.

Engagement from officers dispatched to Locus

35. In terms of how long the Area Control Room should wait on a response from officers when first attending at the scene, that is difficult to answer. You've got to be mindful that the attending officers are trying to deal with the incident. Whether it's this incident with a suspect or any incident where there's possibly going to be conflict or physical violence, they're dealing with the incident and they're not going to be providing you with an update really until that situation's under control or they're shouting for assistance, i.e. they're hitting the red emergency button.

36. You sometimes have to let them manage those initial stages themselves. I've been on the receiving end when you're trying to deal with a call and all you've got going on in your earpiece is, "Can you give us an update? Can you give us an update? What's happening?". You're trying to deal with something in front of you, so it can become a distraction. You have to let the attending officers try and get that situation under control and then look for an update.

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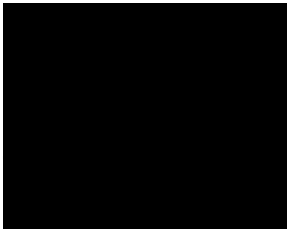
37. If it's an individual officer going off to an incident on their own, then you've obviously got far more concern than if there's multiple officers going. If that individual officer was to lose their radio or have it taken off them, become injured, become unable to shout for assistance, then nobody else can help. If there's multiple officers there, if they're needing assistance then one of them will be able to shout for them.

Overview Inspector – Absence from Desk

38. I have been referred to Inspector Stewart's Inquiry statement³ at paragraph 15. I've been asked why Inspector Stewart would have to return to Overview and why he couldn't take immediate command of the incident from the Control Room floor. From 2018-2020, I worked as an Inspector in East Overview. Having performed the role of Overview Inspector, it has happened to me where I have left my desk and have then received a call saying "We need you back here". The Inspector has to take command from his own desk and his own computer since all of his decisions need to be logged from his terminal. In the Overview, the Inspector also has a team of 3 staff: a RAID officer; communications officer and the Overview Sergeant. The Inspector can give them specific orders and they'll have specific roles.

39. The Inspector would have a board, which would have all his firearms officers on it, so he would know who was on duty that day. He could task his RAID officer with carrying out certain enquiries, perhaps on the location, the address, the caller. Has the caller made previous similar calls? Have they made hoax calls? Does it seem like a credible witness? He would task the communications officer to start directing resources to the area – you could never do that on the floor. You had to get back to your own desk since everything's about logging your rationale and your decision-making.

³ SBPI-00084

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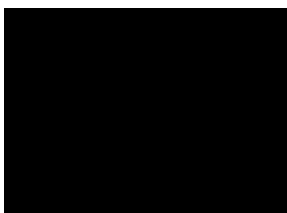
40. The Inspector could never have just commanded the incident from the Control Room floor because he wouldn't have known what was happening other than from people shouting out onto the floor. In any ongoing and dynamic incident, a controller is going to be focused on the screen and what's coming in, they couldn't have an Inspector in their ear saying, "Tell me what's happening, do this, do that,". That just wouldn't have worked. So no, he absolutely had to get back to his desk.

ACR Sergeant - Absence from Desk

41. I have been asked about what happens when a Control Room Sergeant leaves their desk during a shift. In the Control Room, the supervisors all sat together on what at the time was a raised platform or stage. Alongside me, there'd be two other sergeants and the police staff supervisor, so there'd be four of us.

42. If you had to leave your desk during your shift i.e. break, HR issue, the Inspector wanted to talk to you about something - you would just say to somebody "I'm away, will you cover for me?". Unless they had anything significant on, they would do it. If they couldn't then one of the other two would do it. Bearing in mind we work ten-hour shifts, you couldn't sit for ten hours in front of a computer. You had to move about, and you had to go and deal with people and deal with other issues.

43. I can't remember if I communicated that I was leaving my desk on the morning of 3 May 2015. Sergeants were always up and down from their desks, so everyone knows that if you weren't there, there was someone else you could turn to. There could also be situations where I was already dealing with another incident or was on the phone. The controllers would shout over to another Sergeant for assistance. The Sergeants all sat within touching distance of each other and were easily accessible to all controllers.

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44. As well as speaking to the Sergeants, controllers could also turn to other controllers in the pod. So if one controller was particularly busy or wanting additional resources, they could seek assistance from their colleagues.

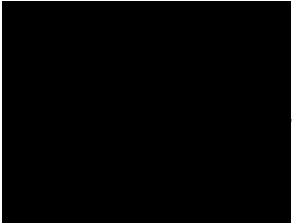
45. So the controllers, whilst I was away from my desk, had the support of their controller colleagues and the other ACR supervisors. They also had the Inspector or Sergeant in Overview at the press of a button. No controller was ever left isolated or on their own.

46. I have been asked who would have been assisting Scott Masterton from the Control Room at the time. I can't confirm who was supervising the incident, but Scott will not have been the only one dealing with the incident in the Control Room centre at that time. I have viewed the incident STORM log⁴, and can see that very quickly into the incident unfolding, East Overview were aware of the incident.

47. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that this statement may form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and be published on the Inquiry's website.

November 18, 2022 | 11:49 AM GMT

Date.....Signature of witness.....



⁴ PS00232

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