

Gaia Pope-Sutherland

Investigation into a missing person enquiry by
Dorset Police

> Independent investigation report



> Investigation information

Investigation name:	Gaia Pope-Sutherland
IOPC reference:	2018/100098
Investigation type:	Complaint subject to special requirements
IOPC office:	Cardiff
Lead investigator:	Martyn Coombe
Case supervisor:	Sarah Patten
Director General delegate (Decision maker):	Mel Palmer
Status of report:	Final
Date finalised:	11 November 2019

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> Introduction

> The purpose of this report

1. I was appointed by the IOPC to carry out an independent investigation into the Dorset Police response to reports Miss Gaia Pope-Sutherland (referred to as Gaia in this report) was missing.
2. At approximately 3.40pm¹ on 7 November 2017, Gaia was recorded on CCTV running south along Morrison Road in Swanage.
3. At 3.42pm, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police for assistance. She explained that Gaia was due to see her GP regarding a referral to the Mental Health Team, but had run out of the house in search of a childhood friend (referred to in this report as Male A).
4. A relative of Male A (Female A), later told officers that Gaia arrived at her house between 3.30pm and 4pm. Female A stated that Gaia was behaving irrationally and eventually left, saying she was going to see her friend, Female B. When spoken to, Female B and her family stated that they had not seen Gaia that day.
5. At approximately 3.59pm², Gaia was recorded on CCTV on Priests Road in Swanage, walking west towards the outskirts of town.
6. At 4.52pm, Gaia's mother called Surrey Police³ to report Gaia missing. During the call, she stated that Gaia suffered from epilepsy and mental health issues, and had been sectioned in the past.
7. At 4.57pm, Surrey Police emailed a missing person report to Dorset Police.
8. At 6.15pm, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police again to report Gaia missing.
9. At 6.18pm, Dorset Police completed a missing person report based on information provided by Gaia's aunt. The report was initially assessed as medium risk, but was upgraded to high risk at 1.24am on 8 November 2017.
10. In the days that followed, Dorset Police explored a number of different lines of enquiry in the search for Gaia. Devon and Cornwall Police, Dorset Search and Rescue (DorSAR), Hampshire and Berkshire Search and Rescue, HM

¹ The footage was time-stamped 3.39.57pm, but was later found to be 30 seconds slow, so the correct time would have been 3.40.27pm.

² The footage was time stamped 4.54pm, but was later found to be 55 minutes fast, so the correct time would have been 3.59pm. This footage was discovered after Gaia was found deceased.

³ Gaia's mother lives in Dorset, but was in the London area when Gaia went missing, so her call was put through to Surrey Police.

[REDACTED]

Coastguard, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWRFS) and members of the public also assisted with the search.

11. On 13 November 2017, officers arrested Male A and Female A on suspicion of murder. They were released under investigation the following day.
12. On the morning of 16 November 2017, members of the public found Gaia's clothing in a field near the cliffs south of Swanage. Later that day, officers arrested a relative of Male A and Female A (Male B), on suspicion of murder. He was released under investigation the following day.
13. On 18 November 2017, Gaia was found deceased in dense undergrowth approximately 300 metres from her discarded clothing, near a coastal path known as the Zig Zag. She had no injuries to suggest third-party involvement, and a post-mortem examination concluded that she had died from hypothermia.
14. On 20 November 2017, Dorset Police confirmed that they would not be taking any further action against Female A, Male A or Male B.
15. This matter came to the attention of the IOPC on 23 February 2018 as a Death or Serious Injury (DSI)⁴ referral, and the IOPC decided to carry out an independent investigation.
16. On 2 May 2018, Gaia's family complained to the IOPC that Dorset Police had failed to carry out an appropriately prompt and thorough search. The IOPC investigation was subsequently reclassified as a complaint investigation.
17. Between November 2018 and October 2019, IOPC investigators obtained accounts from over a hundred witnesses. One of those interviewed was Constable A, who was an Acting Sergeant when Gaia went missing. Certain aspects of Constable A's account were found to be inconsistent with the other evidence, and on that basis, the IOPC investigation was declared subject to special requirements⁵ on 6 August 2019.
18. In an IOPC investigation, the powers and obligations of the Director General (DG) are usually delegated to a senior member of IOPC staff, henceforth referred to as the decision maker. The decision maker for this investigation is Operations Manager Mel Palmer.
19. In this report, I will provide an accurate summary of the evidence, and attach or refer to any relevant documents. I will also provide sufficient information to enable the decision maker to determine:

⁴ Paragraph 12 of the Police Reform Act 2002 defines a DSI matter as any incident in which a member of the public has died or sustained a serious injury in police custody, or following police contact, and where there is an indication that the police contact may have caused or contributed to the death or serious injury. Schedule 3, paragraph 14C of the Police Reform Act 2002 states that police forces must refer all DSI matters to the IOPC.

⁵ Paragraph 19(B), Schedule 3 of the Police Reform Act 2002 states that an investigation will be declared subject to special requirements if there is an indication that a person serving with the police may have committed a criminal offence, or behaved in a manner that would justify disciplinary proceedings.

[REDACTED]

- whether the family’s complaints are upheld, where appropriate (i.e. where this would not intrude on any associated criminal or misconduct proceedings);
 - whether any person serving with the police has a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct, or no case to answer, or whether any such person’s performance was unsatisfactory;
 - whether disciplinary proceedings should be brought against any person to whose conduct the investigation related, and the form of any such proceedings;
 - whether to refer any matter to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)⁶;
 - whether to make a recommendation to any organisation about any lessons that may need to be learned.
20. On receipt of this report, the decision maker will record her opinion on the above matters.
21. The IOPC will then send a copy of this report and the decision maker’s opinion to Dorset Police, who must advise the decision maker what action, if any, they will take in response to the investigation findings. If the decision maker does not agree, she may make recommendations and ultimately directions for further actions or determinations.

> **Background information about Gaia**

[REDACTED]

22. Gaia Pope-Sutherland was born on 22 July 1998. She suffered from severe epilepsy, exacerbated by stress, for which she was prescribed medication. She could have up to twenty or thirty seizures a day, and would often experience periods of confusion and disorientation following major seizures.
23. In December 2015, Gaia’s sister contacted Dorset Police to report that Gaia had been raped approximately twelve months ago, at the age of sixteen. At that time, the suspect was already under investigation by Dorset Police for [REDACTED] offences.
24. In June 2016, Dorset Police decided to take no further action in relation to Gaia’s case⁷ on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence to support a prosecution.
25. [REDACTED] Gaia’s alleged rapist pleaded guilty to three unrelated [REDACTED] [REDACTED] charges. He was sentenced to two years in prison.
26. Gaia normally lived with her mother and two sisters in Langton Matravers. However, in the weeks before she went missing, she stayed with her aunt in

⁶ Paragraph 23(2)(b) and (c) of the Police Reform Act 2002 set out the criteria for referral to the CPS.

⁷ The IOPC has also investigated how Dorset Police dealt with the rape allegation. The findings from that investigation are outlined in a separate report.

[REDACTED]

Swanage, and occasionally with her uncle in Bournemouth. She had been staying with her uncle in the days before she went missing.

27. On 7 November 2017, Gaia was due to meet with the police to discuss an incident five days before in which a man had sent her sexually explicit images via Facebook messenger.
28. Gaia's aunt stated that Gaia began acting strangely at around 3.30pm that day, and left the house in search of Male A. She stated that she tried to follow Gaia in her car, but lost sight of her on Morrison Road.
29. Gaia's family reported that her mental health had deteriorated significantly in the days leading up to her disappearance. They believe this deterioration was caused by her anxiety over her alleged rapist's imminent release from prison, and was further exacerbated by the incident involving the explicit images.
30. Gaia's cousin read out a statement on behalf of the family at the opening of the inquest. She described Gaia as "*loving, joyful and brave... a bright and powerful young woman who wanted to devote her life to others.*"

> **Complaints made by Gaia's family**

31. Gaia's family complained that Dorset Police initially failed to recognise that Gaia was high risk, even though they knew she was vulnerable. They expressed their belief that Gaia might have been found alive if the police had treated her as high risk from the outset. They stated that, days into the search, officers still seemed unaware of the seriousness of her epilepsy.
32. They alleged that the initial risk assessment was influenced by assumptions about Gaia, stemming from the rape investigation.
33. They further alleged that the police failed to act on critical information provided by family members, and failed to carry out diligent and thorough searches of the areas identified. In particular, they stated that Gaia's mother and sister told the police at a very early stage that Gaia would be likely to go to Priests Way and Dancing Ledge. They stated that the police assured them this area had been searched thoroughly in the first 48-72 hours, using search dogs and thermal imaging cameras, and that one officer told Gaia's cousin, "*If Gaia had been there, we would have found her.*"
34. The family expressed their distress and concern over how long it took to find Gaia's clothes and her body. They stated that Gaia's clothes were found on a direct route from where she was last seen, and should have been visible from the upper coastal path.
35. They further stated that the police initially refused to allow Gaia's aunt to view and positively identify the clothes as belonging to Gaia.
36. They alleged that the police failed to organise the searches so that they were effective, and failed to utilise resources properly. In particular, they alleged that the police did not liaise properly with the teams of civilians who volunteered to help. They stated that this was an exceptional and critical resource which, had it been utilised properly, would have contributed significantly to the search effort.

[REDACTED]

- 37. They stated that a Facebook page was set up on 8 November 2017, with a log of locations that had been searched by civilian volunteers. They stated that the police refused to look at the Facebook page, and that one officer told Gaia's cousin they were "*not allowed to use Facebook.*"
- 38. They stated that the police did not contact the civilian volunteers directly until 11 November 2017, and did not give them any clear or concrete instructions on how best to search. They stated that the police failed throughout to communicate properly with the civilian search teams, resulting in a chaotic and disorganised approach to the search.
- 39. They stated that the police forbade the civilian volunteers from searching rural areas due to safety concerns, but assured the family these areas had already been thoroughly searched. The family stated that, given where Gaia was found, they had no confidence that these areas had been searched properly.
- 40. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] They alleged that, when questioning Gaia's sister about Gaia's whereabouts, an officer asked her whether she knew "*how much money [the search] was costing*".
- 41. The family complained that their Family Liaison Officer (FLO) (referred to in this report as FLO A) did not assist with arranging mental health support for them, and was often unreachable by phone. They further alleged that he inappropriately attended Gaia's aunt's home on the evening of 17 November 2017, questioned her about footage that had been released to the media, encouraged her to write and sign a statement about her movements on the day Gaia went missing, and discouraged her from obtaining legal advice.
- 42. The family queried whether the arrests on 13 and 16 November 2017 were lawful. They stated that they were told the police arrested Male A and Female A because their stories "*did not add up*"; which turned out to be because the clock on a CCTV camera was faulty. They stated that the police told them that, due to a recent change in policy, arresting someone on suspicion of murder was the only way they could search their address and interview them over a sufficient period. The family stated that this explanation was confusing, and suggested that the police did not have reasonable grounds to suspect an offence. The family expressed the view that the arrests discouraged the civilian volunteers, and may have had an impact on the police search, specifically on the deployment of helicopters.
- 43. Finally, the family alleged that Dorset Police failed to provide accurate information to them, particularly in relation to Gaia's final resting place, which caused them significant distress.

> **Appendices to this report**

44. Appendix 1 outlines the role of the IOPC.

45. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

46. Appendix 3 features a glossary of police terms and acronyms that may not be familiar to the reader.

47. [REDACTED]

> The investigation

> Terms of reference

■ 48. Operations Manager Mel Palmer approved the terms of reference for this investigation on 15 June 2018.

■ 49. On 30 August 2019, the terms of reference were amended to reflect the fact that the investigation had become a conduct investigation.

50. The terms of reference are as follows:

1. To investigate the Dorset Police response to the missing person report made in respect of Miss Gaia Pope-Sutherland on 7 November 2017, specifically:
 - a) To address the complaints made by Gaia's family;
 - b) To examine the actions and decisions of the officers dealing with the missing person report, up to the discovery of Gaia's body;
 - c) To consider whether the missing person report was appropriately risk assessed, reviewed and resourced; and
 - d) To consider whether police action was in accordance with applicable legislation and local and national guidance, policies and procedures regarding missing persons.
2. To assist in fulfilling the state's investigative obligation arising under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) by ensuring as far as possible that the investigation is independent, effective, open and prompt, and that the full facts are brought to light and any lessons are learned.
3. To identify whether any subject of the investigation may have committed a criminal offence and, if appropriate, make early contact with the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). On receipt of the final report, the decision maker shall determine whether the report should be sent to the DPP.
4. To enable an assessment as to whether any subject of the investigation has a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct or no case to answer.

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5. To consider and report on whether there may be organisational learning, including:
 - whether any change in policy or practice would help to prevent a recurrence of the event, incident or conduct investigated;
 - whether the incident highlights any good practice that should be shared.

> Subjects of the investigation

51. Any police officer, police staff member or relevant contractor whose conduct is under investigation will be classed as a subject of the investigation.
52. All subjects must be served with a notice of investigation informing them of the allegations against them, and stating whether the allegations would amount to misconduct or gross misconduct if proven.
53. Constable A was served with a notice of investigation on 14 August 2019, worded as follows:

“On the afternoon of 7 November 2017, you were the acting sergeant at Wareham police station with responsibility for policing of the Wareham and Swanage areas. During the course of the afternoon you became aware that Miss Pope-Sutherland was missing, and that [Constable B] was making enquires in an attempt to locate her.

You have provided two witness statements at the request of the IOPC Lead Investigator, in which you have detailed your actions on the afternoon and evening of 7 November 2017.

Following a review of those statements, other documentation and statements from other officers obtained, it is alleged that:

1. *You failed to satisfactorily handover the missing person investigation into Ms Pope Sutherland to ensure appropriate progress, in that:*
2. *You failed to inform the covering night shift sergeants in Poole, who were responsible for policing Wareham and Swanage overnight 7-8 November 2017, that Miss Pope-Sutherland was missing. Neither did you inform any other supervisory officer, who could have taken the investigation forward.*
3. *You failed to appropriately task the Wareham night shift officers with carrying out any enquires in an attempt to locate Miss Pope-Sutherland.*
4. *You failed to document and record any enquires you instructed to be carried out, if indeed you did request any such actions.*

If proven, this may amount to a breach of the standards of professional behaviour in relation to duties and responsibilities.”

54. These allegations were assessed as amounting to misconduct if proven or admitted. IOPC investigators interviewed Constable A under misconduct caution on 22 August 2019.

> Policies, procedures and legislation considered

55. During the investigation, I have examined relevant national and local policies and legislation, as set out below. This information will enable the decision maker and the appropriate authority to consider whether the officers and staff named in this report complied with the applicable guidance and legislation, and whether the existing policies were sufficient in the circumstances.

> The National Decision Model (NDM)

56. The College of Policing is the professional body for people who work in policing. The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) is a comprehensive body of online guidance on policing. Police officers and staff are expected to consider the APP when discharging their responsibilities.
57. The APP states that police officers should adopt the following process when making a decision:
- Consider what information and intelligence is available and/or required;
 - Assess the threat and risk, and develop a working strategy;
 - Consider what powers and policies apply;
 - Consider what options are available to resolve the situation with the least risk of harm, and develop a contingency plan;
 - Consider whether the decision is consistent with the police Code of Ethics⁸; and
 - Take action, review the outcome, and repeat the above stages if necessary.
58. This process is known as the National Decision Model (NDM).

> The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Missing Persons

⁸ The Code of Ethics was produced by the College of Policing as a code of practice under section 39A of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 124 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014). It sets and defines the standards of behaviour for everyone who works in policing.

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59. The College of Policing APP on Missing Persons⁹ states that anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered missing until they are located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.
 60. The APP states that a missing person should be graded as medium risk if the risk of harm to the subject or public is deemed likely but not serious. It states that this category requires an active and measured response by the police and other agencies, in order to trace the missing person and support their family.
 61. The APP states that a missing person should be graded as high risk if the risk of serious harm to the subject or public is deemed very likely. Risk of serious harm is defined as “*A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.*”
 62. The APP states that a high risk case requires the immediate deployment of police resources, although action may be delayed in exceptional circumstances, such as when searching water or forested areas in darkness.
 63. The APP states that, in high risk cases, a member of the senior management team must be involved in setting initial lines of enquiry and approving staffing levels. It further states that an Investigating Officer (IO), a Police Search Adviser (PoSA), and possibly a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) should be appointed, family support should be put in place where appropriate, and the NCA Missing Persons Bureau (MPB) should be notified “*without undue delay*”. A missing person process chart outlines the appropriate police response to the different risk categories ██████████.
 64. The APP states that certain minimum actions should be undertaken in all cases, including completing a risk assessment, and creating and recording a plan of immediate actions.
 65. It states that police forces must submit case details to the MPB in all cases where the person is still missing after 72 hours. If a case is of particular concern (for example, if a serious crime is suspected or if there is significant public or media interest), the MPB should be notified immediately.
 66. The APP states that, in such cases, police forces should also consider contacting the National Crime Agency (NCA) Specialist Operations Centre (SOC), for support and expert advice.
 67. The APP lists charities that can provide families with advice and support, including Missing People, the Lucie Blackman Trust, the Samaritans and Mind.
 68. The APP on Risk Assessment¹⁰ states that risk assessments should be based on current risk levels, and should not be driven by previous assumptions or experiences.

⁹ College of Policing APP, Missing Persons, www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/, accessed on 2 April 2019.

¹⁰ College of Policing APP, Risk Assessment, www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/risk-assessment/, accessed on 3 April 2019.

69. The APP on Missing Person Investigations¹¹ states that the first officer deployed to a report of a missing person should (among other things):
- Gather sufficient information about the missing person to enable an effective and thorough investigation to be conducted;
 - Consider taking a full statement from the person making the report and/or the last person to see the missing person;
 - Conduct initial searches of relevant premises, and record the extent and nature of any searches;
 - Obtain details of the individual’s mobile phone and, if they have the phone with them, arrange for a TextSafe® message to be sent;
 - Consider the need for specialist officers or resources; and
 - Circulate details of the missing person to officers and relevant local partners, such as hospitals, the ambulance service, taxi firms and bus firms.
70. The APP states that first-line supervisors should (among other things):
- Review the risk assessment;
 - Allocate sufficient resources to pursue an effective investigation, and ensure that appropriate actions are taken to locate the missing person without delay;
 - Consider the need for an early media release where appropriate;
 - Consider involving a detective, a PolSA, a senior management team and child-specific services; and
 - Consider the need for a multi-agency response.
71. The APP states that a supervisor should ensure the case is reviewed and the risk reassessed at regular intervals, taking account of any new information. The frequency of reviews will depend on the circumstances of the case.
72. The APP further states that the Investigating Officer should seek advice from a PolSA as necessary when developing the search strategy.

> [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

¹¹ College of Policing APP, Missing Person Investigations, www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/missing-person-investigations/, accessed on 3 April 2019.

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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80. The Risk Principles¹² are a set of ten principles that are intended to support decision makers and help them to make decisions about risks with greater confidence. They are as follows:
1. The willingness to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty (i.e., risk taking) is a core professional requirement of all members of the police service.
 2. Maintaining or achieving the safety, security and wellbeing of individuals and communities is a primary consideration in risk decision making.
 3. Risk taking involves judgement and balance. Decision makers are required to consider the value and likelihood of the possible benefits of a particular decision against the seriousness and likelihood of possible harm.
 4. Harm can never be totally prevented. Risk decisions should, therefore, be judged by the quality of the decision making, not by the outcome.
 5. Making risk decisions, and reviewing others' decisions, is difficult and should take into account whether the decisions involved dilemmas or emergencies, or were part of a sequence of decisions, or might appropriately be taken by other agencies.
 6. The standard expected and required of members of the police service is that their risk decisions should be consistent with those that a body of officers of similar rank, specialism or experience would have taken in the same circumstances.
 7. Whether to record a decision is a risk decision in itself, which should be left to professional judgement. The decision on whether to make a record, and on the extent of that record, should be made after considering the likelihood of harm occurring and its seriousness.
 8. To reduce risk aversion and improve decision making, policing must learn from successes as well as failures. Good risk taking should be identified, recognised and shared.
 9. Since good risk taking depends on quality information, the police service will work with partner agencies and others to share relevant information about those who pose risk or those who are vulnerable to the risk of harm.
 10. Members of the police service who make decisions consistent with these principles should receive the encouragement, approval and support of their organisation.

> **Dorset Police Missing Persons Policy and Procedure**

¹² College of Policing APP, Risk Principles, www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/risk-2/risk/, accessed on 2 April 2019.

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81. Section 3.1 of this policy (Definitions) states that anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered missing until they are located, and their well-being or otherwise is confirmed.
82. Section 3.2.1 (Categories of Missing Person) states that missing persons can generally be categorised as follows:
- 1) Any child under the age of 18 whose whereabouts cannot be established, or who is not at a place where they are expected;
 - 2) A lost person who is temporarily disorientated and would wish to be found;
 - 3) A person who has voluntarily gone missing who has control over their actions, and who has decided upon a course of action; or
 - 4) A person under the influence of a third party who has gone missing against their will, such as an abduction or murder victim.
83. Section 3.3 (Roles, Responsibilities and Assessment of Risk) states:
- “All staff taking or reviewing a report of a missing person must start with the viewpoint that it is a potential serious crime enquiry. All aspects of a missing person enquiry must be dealt with expeditiously, particularly the interviewing of witnesses and the searching of relevant addresses and place last seen or last known place. It is essential that such enquiries focus on identifying factors which may give cause for concern, e.g.:*
- *behaviour out of character*
 - *no property/cash missing*
 - *signs of violence*
 - *previous history of domestic abuse*
 - *indicators of honour based violence/forced marriage*
 - *demeanour around time of disappearance*
 - *recent Internet activity prior to disappearance*
 - *Deteriorating mental health”*
84. Section 3.3.1 (Role of Call Taker) states that when someone is reported missing, the Call Taker will create a missing person report and alert the Force Command Centre (FCC) supervisors, who will then conduct an initial risk assessment in line with the NDM (see above) and determine whether the person is high, medium or low risk.
85. Section 3.3.3 (Assessment of Risk) states that the Critical Incident Inspector must conduct a further risk assessment within the next six hours.
86. Section 3.3.4 (The Risk Assessment Table) states that risk assessments should be guided by the College of Policing risk principles, the NDM and the Police Code of Ethics¹³.
87. The policy definitions and recommended responses for high and medium risk missing persons mirror those in the College of Policing APP (see above).
88. Section 3.4.1 (Role of Force Incident Commander (FIC)) states:

¹³ The Code of Ethics sets and defines the standards of behaviour that are expected of everyone who works in policing.

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“The FIC, or delegated officer, based within the Force Command Centre, will be responsible for detailing the initial pro-active enquiries in relation to all missing person reports. The FIC will initially act as 'silver commander'. While they will retain the initial accountability for progressing the enquiry it may be appropriate for them to appoint 'bronze' leads for different elements of the investigation such as a bronze search, bronze financial or bronze media. The FIC must ensure that progress is being made with the established lines of enquiry, maintaining regular contact with the Critical Incident Inspector.”

89. Section 3.4.2 (Role of Critical Incident Inspector (C2/D2)) states:

“The Critical Incident Inspector (C2/D2) covering the area the person is reported missing from will play a pivotal role overseeing the investigation. This will include taking responsibility for ensuring clear delegation of tasks, investigative supervision, recording conventions, effective handover and oversight at the Daily Management Meeting process. It must be clearly recorded at all times who is controlling a missing person enquiry. The original reviewing Critical Incident Inspector should, where possible, complete all subsequent reviews to provide continuity and consistency.”

90. Section 3.5.1 (Homicide) states:

“One of the fundamental facts to be determined in a missing person investigation is the reason why the subject has disappeared. In cases where the circumstances are suspicious or are unexplained, use the maxim:-

IF IN DOUBT, THINK 'MURDER, CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING AND INVESTIGATION'.

Failure to apply such thinking in past cases has led to the loss of valuable investigative opportunities. This can ultimately result in failure to trace the missing person or to establish sufficient evidence to convict a perpetrator.”

91. Section 3.6.2 (Use of Police Search Advisors (PoSAs)) states:

“PoSAs should be consulted in all high risk cases unless it is immediately apparent that a search is not relevant at that point, e.g. the missing person was seen to leave in a vehicle and it has not yet been located. PoSA should be liaised with when the vehicle is located, as there is strong evidence that the missing person will be located with the vehicle.

There has been considerable research into the behaviour of missing persons that have produced some compelling statistics about the distance different people are likely to have travelled and areas that they may gravitate towards. Through this knowledge, training and experience PoSAs are able to provide informed advice and where appropriate will plan and direct searches.

A PoSA may deem the incident suitable for the involvement of Dorset Search and Rescue (DorSAR) who are a team of highly-trained volunteers who can provide additional personnel and resources to a Police-led search and can deploy to anywhere in the County within 2 hours.

Use will be made of dogs, helicopter and the marine section if deemed necessary.

PoSAs have overall direction of the search and will compile the search plan. They are responsible for directing all search assets and those persons deployed.”

92. Section 3.6.3 (Lost Person Search Manager (LPSM)) states that the LPSM's duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Review the log/occurrence and produce a search strategy identifying areas for IVCs and searches;
- Task police or volunteer search assets with specific search areas;
- Attend the scene and liaise directly with search assets on the ground (although IVCs should not be delayed pending arrival of the LPSM);
- Record the results of these searches and keep the Critical Incident Inspector updated;
- Provide a full hand on to a PoSA if needed, or to another LPSM if approaching the end of a shift; and
- Review any outstanding high risk missing person within 24 hours, or at the request of the Critical Incident Inspector/FIC/SIO.

93. Section 3.7 (Media) states:

“Involving the public can have positive results in locating missing people and should be considered at an early stage. However, every case should be judged on its own merits as there is a delicate balance to be struck in appealing through various channels including the media for help in tracing missing people. It should be considered that public appeals can have lasting repercussions for victims and their families if they are prepared too hastily.”

>

[REDACTED]



■

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

■

[REDACTED]

98.

[REDACTED]

> **The police power of arrest**

99. Section 24(2) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 states that a constable may arrest anyone whom he has reasonable grounds to suspect of having committed an offence.

100. Section 24(4) states that the power of arrest is exercisable only if the constable has reasonable grounds for believing that an arrest is necessary, for any of the reasons listed under Section 24(5). These reasons include:

- To allow the prompt and effective investigation of the offence or of the conduct of the person in question;
- To prevent the person in question causing physical injury to himself or any other person;
- To prevent the person in question causing loss or damage to property; or
- To prevent any prosecution for the offence from being hindered by the disappearance of the person in question.

> **HM Coastguard search procedures**

101. HM Coastguard guidance on Land Search Planning states:

"Hasty Search

A hasty search is a swift, non detailed pass through an area or segment. The searchers will be looking for a fairly obvious target or clues rather than

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detailed investigation. This is a balance between early target detection and life saving with lower POD¹⁴ against higher a [sic] POD associated with a more detailed search which will clearly take more time to plan and execute.

It is the usual initial response search type and is an acceptance of a decreased POD against early detection and could equate to a search of the 'spokes' of the bike wheel.

Purposeful Wandering

This involves a closer examination of all the most likely areas and spots, looking for the target and clues.

More thorough than a hasty search, it can still cover a relatively large area and allows searchers to 'wander' within their search pattern and investigate likely spots. The search is normally conducted in a line abreast format. The maintenance of search discipline is important, with particular attention being paid to spatial awareness between searchers i.e. how far is it estimated that a searcher could actually see the target.”

> Family Liaison Officer (FLO) Guidance

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102. This national guidance document was produced by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA)¹⁵ in 2008, on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)¹⁶.
 103. It states that an FLO's role is to manage interaction with the family in an investigation, and to liaise with the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) to ensure that families are treated appropriately, professionally and with respect for their needs. However, as family members often hold vital information about a victim's lifestyle and associates, an FLO is also responsible for gathering material and information that may assist the investigation.
 104. The guidance states that FLOs will routinely take identification and antecedent statements, but should only be tasked to conduct an interview with a family member who is a significant witness after careful consideration of the following:
 - Whether the FLO has the skills to conduct such an interview;
 - The extent to which the FLO's position with the family is likely to be compromised by the need to challenge the witness's account;
 - Whether the FLO's knowledge of the case might inadvertently contaminate the interview process; and
 - Whether it is reasonable and realistic to expect the FLO to remain sufficiently objective in view of the particular circumstances of the case.
 105. The guidance states that, to establish trust, unrealistic promises should not be made to the family, and it is vital that any commitments or assurances are

¹⁴ Probability of Detection.

¹⁵ The NPIA was dissolved in October 2013 and replaced by the College of Policing and the National Crime Agency.

¹⁶ ACPO was replaced by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) in 2015.

met. If a commitment cannot be honoured, this must be documented and a timely explanation provided.

106. The guidance states that the family may require support and assistance with a variety of issues, such as trauma arising from bereavement, funeral arrangements, financial or legal advice, health or social services. The guidance states that the nature of support required will vary considerably, depending on the family's individual needs, and as such, the family should be fully involved in the decision-making process.
107. Appendices 6 and 7 to the guidance list various support organisations, most of which are not necessarily relevant to a missing person enquiry. Appendix 6 states:

“If families are reluctant or unwilling to accept offers of help from [these] organisations... FLOs should be proactive in seeking out and establishing alternative support for families. There are other statutory and voluntary organisations, community interest and religious groups that will be able to offer practical support, help and, in some cases, counselling services. FLOs should share this information with the families and assist the family to make contact with such organisations if they so desire.”

> Summary and analysis of the evidence

> Introduction and overview

- 108. Gaia was reported missing on 7 November 2017. At that time, Dorset Police had 63 live missing person cases, 11 of which were reported that same day. Of the 11 reported that day, four were assessed as high risk, and five as medium risk.
109. Dorset Police received a further 18 missing person reports between 6.15pm on 7 November 2017 and midnight on 9 November 2017. Eight of those were assessed as high risk, and three as medium risk.
110. In the ten days that followed, Dorset Police received a further 137 missing person reports. Of these, 41 were assessed as high risk and 61 as medium risk.
- 111. Dorset Police, DorSAR, DWRFS and HM Coastguard covered 2.5 square kilometres (km²) of ground on foot during the search for Gaia, and National Police Air Service (NPAS) and drone searches covered a further 40km² of open ground. HM Coastguard searched 15km of coastline, and specialist dive teams searched ten bodies of water. The search also covered 4.5km of railway lines, and 25km of tracks and footpaths. It was estimated that over 1000 individual officer hours were spent searching for Gaia.
- 112. In addition to physical searches, Dorset Police pursued a number of other lines of enquiry, including media appeals, hospital checks, house-to-house enquiries, vehicle stop checks, enquiries with people known to Gaia and

people she might have encountered after going missing, online research, financial checks, premises searches, and analysis of mobile phone data. Dorset Police also investigated numerous reported sightings.

113. This investigation has not identified any evidence to suggest that a more concentrated approach to these additional lines of enquiry might have resulted in Gaia being found alive. Nor did our investigation identify any notable individual or organisational failings in these areas. Accordingly, this report will focus on certain key aspects of the search, including the initial police risk assessment, the action taken during the first twenty-four hours, the searches of the area where Gaia was eventually found, the arrests on 13 and 16 November 2017, and whether these arrests had any impact on the search for Gaia.
114. The following summary does not reflect all of the material that was gathered during this investigation; nor does it reflect the full magnitude and scope of the search for Gaia.
115. On receipt of this report, the decision maker will record her opinion on whether the family's complaints are upheld, where appropriate, and on whether Constable A has a case to answer for misconduct, and on whether there is any evidence of unsatisfactory performance by any person serving with the police.
116. The threshold test for a finding of case to answer is whether a reasonable tribunal, properly directed, *could* reach a finding of misconduct or gross misconduct on the balance of probabilities. I will not reach any determinative findings in relation to misconduct or performance in this report.

> The first calls to police

> Contemporaneous evidence

117. At 4.13pm on 2 November 2017, Gaia called 101 to report that a man had sent her sexually explicit images after she accepted a Facebook friend request from him. A log was created in respect of her call, reference 345, and arrangements were made to speak to her on 7 November 2017¹⁷.
118. At 12.10pm on 7 November 2017, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police to make arrangements to bring Gaia to the police station. The Call Handler was unable to find the log from 2 November 2017, so created a new log with reference number 160. During this call, Gaia could be heard in the background in apparent distress.

¹⁷ They did not set a time. It was agreed that Gaia's aunt would take Gaia to the police station at some point in the afternoon; when Gaia became distressed, her aunt suggested waiting to see if she was well enough to attend the police station after her 5pm GP appointment.

119. At 12.32pm, log 160 was updated to reflect that it was a duplicate. The update included the reference number for the original log (reference 345).
120. At approximately 3.40pm, footage from a CCTV camera on Morrison Road in Swanage shows Gaia running in the direction of Male A's address.
121. At 3.42pm on 7 November 2017, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police to request assistance.
122. She told the Call Handler that Gaia was a rape survivor, who had recently been sent images that triggered an episode of mental ill health. She stated that Gaia had just run out of her house *"on some delusion, having remembered some friend not far away, whose baby she thinks she's carrying, she's not at all, I mean she hasn't been in touch with this friend for months..."*
123. Gaia's aunt told the Call Handler she needed help to ensure Gaia attended an appointment with her GP, regarding a referral to the Mental Health Team. She then said she was about to go into another address (she did not say where) in case Gaia was there.
124. The Call Handler offered to wait on the line to see if Gaia was there before sending officers out. Gaia's aunt replied, *"I'm just checking, hang on... if I've got no reply here I shall be returning home in case she's gone back to me."* At this point the call ended; it is not clear whether this was because Gaia's aunt hung up, or because reception was lost.
125. At 3.50pm, the Call Handler recorded on log 345 from 2 November 2017 that Gaia had just run out of the house. The same entry appeared on the duplicate log, reference 160.
126. At 3.54pm, this information was passed to officers in the local area, along with a description of Gaia.
127. Footage from a CCTV camera on Priests Road in Swanage shows Gaia walking west towards the outskirts of town at approximately 3.59pm. This footage was discovered on 19 November 2017, the day after Gaia was found deceased.
128. Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police again at 4.37pm, and spoke to Dispatcher A. She explained that she was calling to check whether police were searching for Gaia, as she had not heard anything. She stated that the previous Call Handler had taken her number and told her somebody would call her¹⁸.
129. Dispatcher A asked Gaia's aunt if she had called earlier to report Gaia missing, and she replied that she had. Dispatcher A then took Gaia's aunt's name, her location, Gaia's name and age, and the time of her last call.
130. Dispatcher A clarified that Gaia's aunt had called earlier to report Gaia missing. Gaia's aunt replied, *"Well, just that she'd ran out and it's a mental health issue, we've got an appointment at the doctor's at five o'clock, erm, to refer to mental health services, and I was, I was going to pass on a message that could they please take her straight to the medical centre in Swanage and"*

¹⁸ The previous Call Handler did not take Gaia's aunt's number, and did not tell her someone would call her back.

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I'll meet them there, but I can't get hold of anybody, and it really panics me when I manage to get through and people say there's no record, and I just, my whole day's been like this today."

131. Dispatcher A then took further details, including a description of Gaia.
132. Gaia's aunt informed Dispatcher A that Gaia was a survivor of rape, and was "very mentally unwell" and suffering an "episode or decline". She stated that Gaia had run out of the house on impulse, and that her short-term memory was very poor. She stated that Gaia had no phone with her, and no friends in the area, and that she did not know where she might have gone.
133. Dispatcher A asked whether Gaia had ever self-harmed or attempted suicide before, and Gaia's aunt replied, "*Not to my knowledge, not to my knowledge, I mean she has, she's very emotional at the moment, she's got a lot of anger inside her, a lot of upset, she did say, she did shout out this morning, 'I hate this life, which I haven't heard before.'*"
134. Dispatcher A stated that she would try to find the record of Gaia's aunt's earlier call "*and broadcast it to see if we can get an officer to go round and have a look around the town for her*".
135. Dispatcher A then informed Gaia's aunt that she had found the log for her earlier call, and that the reference number was 160. Following this, both parties ended the call.

- █ 136. Dispatcher A did create a written record of this call, as per standard procedure¹⁹. She summarised the call as follows:

"Further call re concern for niece Gaia pope aged 19. Inft has been out searching for Gaia who has an appt at 1700 at Swanage medical centre to try and obtain some help for MH issues. Inft has searched around the town, Gaia's HA in Langton Matravers, and has contacted the medical centre to see if she has turned up for her appointment. Gaia does not have a phone, her memory is poor and is currently mentally unstable. She has not previously self-harmed as far as inft is aware, but is very angry and said 'i hate this life' earlier today. Inft asking if there is any update from police. Please rebroadcast desc."

137. Dispatcher A graded the record as high priority, and categorised it as a concern for welfare. She then linked the record to the duplicate log, 160. However, she did not create a fresh incident log, and did not record any details of the call on log 345 from 2 November 2017. Hers was the last entry recorded on log 160.

- █ 138. At 4.52pm, Gaia's mother called Surrey Police to report Gaia missing. Entries on the Surrey Police log state:

- Gaia was last seen approximately ten minutes ago, at which time she had said she was going to see Female B.

¹⁹ When a member of the public is put through to a call handler after calling 101 or 999, the call handler will create a written record of that call even if it is not a police matter. If it is a police matter, the call handler will create an incident log or a NICHE occurrence and the information will be transferred across. If there is already a log open, a written record of the call will still be created and the details added to the log.

- She had been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following a rape, and had recently received “*awful messages*” and an explicit image from the alleged rapist²⁰ online.
- She was psychotic, and had been sectioned numerous times in the past. She was taking medication for her mental health issues.
- She posed a danger to herself, as she was epileptic and suffered from chronic seizures.
- She was very emotional, and it was out of character for her to go missing.

139. An entry on the Surrey Police log at 4.57pm states, “*Dorset advised to email this report over and it will be picked up urgently.*”²¹

140. At 4.58pm, Gaia’s aunt called Dorset Police again and stated:
“I want to know there’s somebody helping me find my niece. She’s got mental health issues, she’s rushed out of the house, we need to get her to the medical centre in Swanage who were expecting her at five o’ clock, but they’re there till about six o’ clock. Erm, and she was last seen wandering up [the street where Female B was living at the time].” She stated that this would have been about an hour ago.

141. Gaia’s aunt reiterated that Gaia was a rape survivor and “*very unwell*”. She stated that nobody had contacted her, she had not seen any police officers, and she felt “*completely in the dark*”.

142. The Call Handler stated that they would update the incident with details of the last sighting, and would “*pass it on to our officers to make some further enquiries in the area there*”. The Call Handler further confirmed that Dorset Police had been “*making enquiries on the incident*” and “*contacting various people*”.

143. Gaia’s aunt asked if someone could call her back, and the Call Handler confirmed that they would request this. They then ended the call.

144. At 4.59pm, Surrey Police forwarded the log of Gaia’s mother’s call to Winfrith Control Room, marked as high importance.

145. At 5.02pm, a member of staff in Winfrith Control Room forwarded the Surrey Police log to the Control Room Supervisor.

146. An entry on the Dorset Police log (reference 345) at 5.04pm states that Gaia’s aunt had called again to say she believed Gaia was going to see Female B.

147. A further entry at 5.15pm states:

“Email has been received from Surrey Police as Mispers²² [sic] mother has called in to them as she is in the London area at this time, reporting the same - mother is [REDACTED] and can be contacted on [REDACTED] they

²⁰ The person who sent the messages and image was not the alleged rapist. Nonetheless, this incident caused Gaia significant distress, and family members believe it contributed to her mental and emotional state on the day of her disappearance.

²¹ It appears the intended meaning was: “Dorset advised us to email this report over” rather than “Dorset was advised to email this report over”.

²² A police shorthand term for missing person.

[REDACTED]

believe that she [Gaia] may be at [Female B's address], can we please ask a unit to attend that address in the first instance before we record her as a Misper. Email from Surrey has been attached to the occ."²³

148. An entry at 5.20pm states that Constable B had spoken to Female B²⁴, who had said she had not heard from Gaia in years.
149. An entry at 5.25pm states:
"HSO²⁵ noted - can a call handler please be allocated to call the aunt who last saw Gaia to complete a Misper RI [sic – RA, i.e. risk assessment] on a new incident please."
150. An automated entry at 5.31pm states:
"HSS²⁶ message received and dealing."
151. An entry at 5.48pm states:
"Have called [Gaia's aunt] to complete Misper RA but she advised me she couldn't do it at that moment as she was on the phone to someone she believed had a lead on where Gaia is. She states she will call back as soon as she can to complete the RA."
152. An entry at 6.11pm states that a new missing person log should be created when Gaia's aunt called back.

> Account provided by Dispatcher A

- [REDACTED]
153. Dispatcher A provided a statement to the IOPC on 22 October 2019.
 154. She stated that she formed the opinion Gaia's aunt was calling to report a concern for welfare, as she said she was calling about a mental health issue rather than a missing person. She stated that, when she asked whether Gaia's aunt had reported Gaia missing earlier, she replied, *"Well just that she'd ran out and it's a mental health issue, we've got an appointment at the doctors at five o' clock"*.
 155. She stated that she formed the opinion Gaia's aunt was worried about Gaia running around town and potentially missing her GP appointment.
 156. She stated that she believed log 160 was the log relating to Gaia's aunt's earlier call, as it included an entry referencing that call. She stated that she recorded details of Gaia's aunt's call on this log, and requested that Gaia's details be re-broadcast for the attention of officers in the Purbeck area.

²³ Occurrence (i.e. the incident log).

²⁴ Female B and her father subsequently provided statements to Dorset Police. Female B's father stated that he and Female B went out to lunch at approximately 12.30pm on 7 November 2017, following which she returned home and he went shopping. He stated that Female B was at home when he returned at approximately 4pm, and that she went out to work at approximately 5.30pm, and shortly after that, Gaia's aunt came to the address looking for Gaia. Both confirmed Gaia did not come to their house that day.

²⁵ "HSO" or "HSS" is the code for the "top table" in the Control Room, where the FIC, the Deployment Manager and the FIB24 DS sit.

²⁶ See previous footnote.

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157. She stated that she had received no training on missing persons or calls reporting a concern for welfare.

> **Account provided by the Control Room Supervisor**

- ████ 158. The Control Room Supervisor provided a statement to the IOPC on 18 June 2019.
159. He stated that he spoke to Gaia's mother at 5.15pm, following receipt of the email from Surrey Police, and she asked him to speak to Gaia's aunt.
160. He stated that he then attached the email from Surrey Police to the pre-existing log of 2 November 2017, and tasked an officer to speak to Female B. He stated that he was subsequently told that Gaia was not with Female B, and at 5.25pm, he requested that a risk assessment be undertaken. He stated that he also alerted the Control Room "*top table*", who picked up the log at 5.31pm.
161. He stated that a missing person log was created at 6.18pm, and he added the information from Surrey Police to the Reports tab on that log.
162. He stated that he was aware Surrey Police had graded the call as high risk; however, Dorset Police had to complete their own risk assessment based on information gathered by officers at the scene. He stated that he did not flag the email to the Force Incident Commander (FIC), "*because the risk assessment was in hand*".
163. He stated that the FIC would have been aware of the information when he completed the risk assessment, as he recorded his decision and rationale on the log of 2 November 2017, as well as on the missing person log.

> **Analysis of the evidence**

164. At 3.42pm, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police to request help in ensuring that Gaia attended a GP appointment. She explained that Gaia had just run out of her house "*on some delusion, having remembered some friend not far away, whose baby she thinks she's carrying, she's not at all, I mean she hasn't been in touch with this friend for months...*"
165. She provided some information about Gaia's history, vulnerability and current mental state, but overall, her comments to the Call Handler suggested that she was not particularly concerned at that stage. She informed the Call Handler that she was looking for Gaia at another (unspecified) address, following which she intended to return home in case Gaia was there. The Call Handler offered to wait on the line to see if Gaia was at the address before sending officers out, but the call ended shortly afterwards.
166. At 3.50pm, the Call Handler recorded on a pre-existing log (relating to Gaia's complaint about being sent sexually explicit images) that Gaia had just run out of the house. This information was passed to officers in the local area.

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167. Because the Call Handler did not create a new log, Gaia's aunt's call was not graded, no risk assessment was undertaken, and officers were not formally tasked with making enquiries.
 168. The College of Policing APP on Missing Persons states that anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered missing until they are located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed. This definition has been adopted by Dorset Police.
 169. Dorset Police missing persons policy states that when someone is reported missing, the Call Handler will create a missing person report and alert FCC supervisors, who will then conduct an initial risk assessment and determine whether the person is high, medium or low risk.
 170. It was arguably apparent from Gaia's aunt's call at 3.42pm that Gaia's precise whereabouts were unknown. However, she mentioned various locations where Gaia might have gone²⁷. She also did not express any specific concerns for Gaia's wellbeing at that time, and the call recording indicates that her primary concern was that Gaia might miss her GP appointment.
 171. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether Gaia should have been treated as a missing person at this stage.
 172. At approximately 3.59pm²⁸, Gaia was caught on CCTV on Priests Road, heading west towards the outskirts of town. This was the last verified sighting of Gaia, before she was found deceased.
 173. At 4.37pm, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police again, and spoke to Dispatcher A. She stated that Gaia had run out of the house on impulse, and that she did not know where she was. She explained that Gaia was a survivor of rape, and was "*very mentally unwell*" and suffering an "*episode or decline*", and that her short-term memory was very poor. She further stated that Gaia had no phone with her, and no friends in the area. Later in the call, she stated that Gaia was very emotional and had "*a lot of anger inside her, a lot of upset*", and had shouted "*I hate this life*" that morning.
 174. At one point during this call, Gaia's aunt stated that she had called before to report Gaia missing. While she did not explicitly say in her earlier call that she wished to report Gaia missing, her use of this terminology was indicative of how she perceived the situation by that point. It was also indicative of the level of response she expected from Dorset Police.
 175. When Dispatcher A clarified that Gaia's aunt had called before to report Gaia missing, she replied, "*Well, just that she'd ran out and it's a mental health issue, we've got an appointment at the doctor's at five o'clock, erm, to refer to mental health services, and I was, I was going to pass on a message that could they please take her straight to the medical centre in Swanage and I'll meet them there...*"

²⁷ Gaia's aunt indicated that Gaia might be with Male A, and/or at the address she was about to enter, or back at her home address.

²⁸ This footage was only discovered after Gaia was found.

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176. Dispatcher A stated that she would try to find the record of Gaia's aunt's earlier call "*and broadcast it to see if we can get an officer to go round and have a look around the town for her*".
 177. Dispatcher A then gave Gaia's aunt the number for a duplicate log pertaining to Gaia's complaint of 2 November 2017.
 178. Dispatcher A did not create a new log in respect of Gaia's aunt's call. As a result, this call was not graded, no risk assessment was carried out, and officers were not formally tasked with making enquiries. The evidence does not indicate that any officers were tasked or dispatched as a result of this call.
 179. Dispatcher A recorded details of Gaia's aunt's call on the duplicate log (which had already been updated with details of the correct log), but not on the main log of 2 November 2017. (Later, at 6.35pm, Dispatcher A recorded on the missing persons log that Gaia had been very angry when she left the house, and had shouted, "*I hate this life.*".)
 180. Dispatcher A explained that she believed Gaia's aunt was only reporting a concern for welfare, as her call related to a mental health issue, and when she asked whether Gaia's aunt had reported Gaia missing earlier, she replied, "*Well just that she'd ran out and it's a mental health issue...*" She stated that she believed Gaia's aunt was worried about Gaia running around the town and potentially missing her GP appointment. She stated that she believed log 160 was the correct log, as it included an entry referencing Gaia's aunt's earlier call. She stated that she had received no training on missing persons or concerns for welfare.
 181. At 4.58pm, shortly after Gaia's mother's call to Surrey Police, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police again. She stated that Gaia was a rape survivor and was "*very unwell*", and had last been seen about an hour ago. She asked if anybody was out helping to look for her. She stated that nobody had contacted her, she had not seen any police officers, and she felt "*completely in the dark*". The Call Handler stated that she would update the incident log with details of the last sighting, and would "*pass it on to our officers to make some further enquiries in the area there*".
 182. Again, the Call Handler did not create a new log, meaning that Gaia's aunt's call was not graded, no risk assessment was carried out, and officers were not formally tasked or dispatched.
 183. The Call Handler also informed Gaia's aunt that Dorset Police had been "*making enquiries on the incident*" and "*contacting various people*". In fact, there was nothing on the log at that time to indicate that enquiries were being made.
 184. At 4.59pm, Surrey Police forwarded the log of Gaia's mother's call to Winfrith Control Room, marked as high importance, and it was passed to the Control Room Supervisor, who recorded an update on the existing log at 5.15pm. He recorded that Gaia may be at Female B's address, and requested that officers attend that address before creating a missing person report.

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185. At 5.20pm, Constable B updated the log to reflect that he had spoken with Female B, with a negative result.
 186. At 5.25pm, a Call Handler was allocated to contact Gaia's aunt and create a missing persons log. In the event, a log was not created until 6.15pm, as Gaia's aunt was initially unable to complete the risk assessment questions.
 187. The evidence indicates that Constable B was the only officer undertaking enquiries until approximately 9pm²⁹, at which point Constables C and D were asked to "keep a look out" for Gaia on their way back to Bournemouth (see below). This was the extent of their involvement. Constables E and F were then tasked with making some enquiries at approximately 1.23am, the other three officers having finished their shifts some time ago.
 188. It is hard to say whether the outcome might have been different if a missing person log had been created at 4.37pm, because so little is known about Gaia's movements after she left Female A's address. However, it is likely that, if a missing person log had been created at 4.37pm, a more coordinated approach would have been taken sooner, with better appreciation of risk and of Gaia's unique circumstances.
 189. Gaia reportedly told Female A as she left that she was going to see Female B. However, Female B lived south-east of the last known sighting of Gaia on Priests Road. In other words, when Gaia was recorded on CCTV on Priests Road, she was walking away from Female B's house.
 190. According to Female B's father, Female B was at home during the period between Gaia leaving Female A's address and being caught on CCTV on Priests Road, yet neither of them saw nor heard from Gaia that day.
 191. Following the CCTV sighting on Priests Road at 3.59pm, it is possible, in her confused state, that Gaia did head back into Swanage or take a more circuitous route out of town. However, there is currently no evidence to suggest that she did. No further CCTV footage of Gaia was found, and there were no verified witness sightings.
 192. If Gaia had continued heading out of town and made her way directly to the location where she was later found, IOPC investigators estimated that she could have arrived there by approximately 4.30pm, having conducted a timed walk of the route between Priests Road and the Zig Zag coastal path ██████████
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 193. Constable F reported that the weather conditions were cold on that day, with high winds. PoISA A subsequently recorded that weather conditions were poor, with constant rain until 8pm. BBC weather data (see below) indicates that the sun set at 4.32pm, and by 10pm, temperatures were expected to drop to three degrees Celsius.
 194. The Forensic Pathologist theorised (see elsewhere in the report) that Gaia may have undressed as a paradoxical response to hypothermia. I do not

²⁹ Excluding the search by NPAS, which took place between 8.40pm and 9.10pm.

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have any data regarding how long it would take for a person to develop hypothermia in these conditions, but presumably Gaia would have been at heightened risk as it was wet and cold, and she was not wearing a jacket.

195. Gaia was also known to suffer from severe epilepsy, which was exacerbated by stress. Her family stated that, even when taking daily medication, she would have approximately ten seizures during the day and twelve during the night. If she had been immobilised or impeded by seizures, in poor weather without a coat, this could potentially have further increased her vulnerability to exposure.
196. Finally, Female A reported that Gaia was visibly sweating and complaining of feeling hot when she saw her at approximately 3.30pm. She stated that Gaia stripped to her underwear, and had to be persuaded to get dressed again. This raises the possibility that Gaia discarded her clothes simply because she began feeling hot again, which could have happened relatively soon after she reached the cliffs³⁰. Without clothing, after sunset, at that time of year and in the weather conditions described, Gaia would have been particularly vulnerable to exposure.
197. In summary, we cannot rule out the possibility that Gaia followed a more or less direct route to the area where she was found, and succumbed to exposure within a relatively short timeframe.
198. If she had spent a significant period of time on open ground before moving into the undergrowth, for example, if she had been disorientated and moving slowly, then there would have been an increased likelihood of NPAS locating her if they had been deployed sooner.
199. However, the evidence does not enable us to say how quickly Gaia reached her final resting place, and the available evidence does not enable us to express a view on whether a more timely police response might have resulted in her being found alive.
200. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether the initial calls to Dorset Police were handled appropriately.

> The initial risk assessment

> Contemporaneous evidence

³⁰ If Gaia had had no physical or mental health issues, it would in my view be very unlikely that she would have discarded her clothing in inclement weather upon reaching the cliffs. The most likely hypothesis in those circumstances would be that she had remained clothed until she developed hypothermia and then started to discard her clothing. However, given that Gaia had been undressing at Female A's address and was unwell, it is not possible, in the absence of additional evidence, to rule out that she resumed undressing upon reaching the cliffs (before becoming hypothermic).

201. At 6.15pm, Gaia's aunt called Dorset Police to report Gaia missing.
202. Entries on the Dorset Police missing person log state that Gaia was mentally unstable as the result of a rape two years ago, was taking medication for epilepsy, and suffered from short term memory loss, which caused her to become confused. It was further recorded that she did not have a mobile phone with her, and may not have any money.
203. At 6.35pm, Dispatcher A recorded on the log that Gaia had been very angry when she left the house, and had shouted, "*I hate this life.*"
204. An entry at 6.55pm states that Dorset Police had previously dealt with Gaia on 21 October 2017, after she left Poole Hospital despite "*needing sectioning*" and started screaming at members of the public outside. The entry states that Gaia was suicidal on this occasion.
205. In addition to the above, the following additional relevant information was recorded on the pre-existing log of 2 November 2017:
- Gaia had recently received sexually explicit messages and images from a male on Facebook, which caused her distress and brought up memories of the rape.
 - She had run out of the house at approximately 3.50pm.
 - She was delusional, and believed she was pregnant by an old friend, possibly as the result of a flashback.
 - Gaia's mother had also contacted Surrey Police to report Gaia missing, and the email from them was attached to the log.
206. At 6.58pm, FIC A recorded the following entry on the log of 2 November 2017:
- "Initial missing review. I have conducted an initial review of the details of this missing person contained within the risk assessment and the command and control incident log. Based on this alongside the APP for missing persons I am initially grading this missing person as medium risk. The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.*
- The missing person is vulnerable due to being mentally [sic] unstable and highly emotional as a result of a rape 2 yrs ago. She also suffers epilepsy for which she takes medication, short term memory loss and flashbacks. She is struggling to deal with the rape matter and is currently receiving counselling [sic] to assist with this. She has also been the victim of inappropriate [sic] messages and images being sent via FB messenger which has sparked the flashbacks to the rape incident. This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies to trace the missing person and support the person reporting. Critical Incident Inspector to oversee enquiries and review risk and enquiries once full details have been obtained."*
207. At 7.01pm, FIC A recorded the same entry on the missing person log.
208. A further entry by the Critical Incident Inspector at 1.24am on 8 November 2017 states:

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*“I have reviewed this misper and the previous incident. I am upgrading misper to****high risk*** in view of missing her medication and may [sic] have collapsed.”*

> **Account provided by the Team Deployment Manager**

- 209. The Team Deployment Manager provided a statement to the IOPC on 10 April 2019. She explained that she, the FIC and the Force Intelligence Bureau DS were collectively known as the “top table”, and held overall responsibility for managing incidents that had a significant level of threat, risk and harm, including missing person reports.
- 210. She stated that the Call Handler transferred the log to the top table at 6.34pm, and FIC A picked it up at 6.48pm. She stated that she and FIC A had an agreement that they would share missing person reviews, and that whoever picked up the log first would take ownership.
- 211. She stated that FIC A passed the incident to the Risk Management Unit³¹ (RMU) at 6.53pm, and graded Gaia as medium risk at 7.01pm.

> **Account provided by the Critical Incident Inspector**

- 212. The Critical Incident Inspector provided a statement to the IOPC on 25 January 2019. He stated that his shift started at 6.30pm on 7 November 2017, and initially his time was taken up in dealing with custody issues and a high-risk missing person.
- 213. He stated that he became aware of the incident log relating to Gaia at approximately 1.16am, and on reviewing the log, he formed the impression that it should be upgraded immediately to high-risk. He stated:

“I did feel that even with the initial information this should have been the grading when the log was opened. I was also concerned that [due to] the time lapse and without having had the correct oversight, it would be difficult to progress quickly, given the resourcing levels past midnight...”

[I have] previously expressed concerns as have my colleagues around the incident allocation procedure when allocating messages³² to Operational Critical Incident Inspectors and in the past it would not be rare to see up to 15 allocated unread incident messages at the end of a shift to mispers and other incidents, that really should have been past [sic] directly by radio in order to advise us. I am aware that the Force has restructured the role and this may have been rectified.”

> **Missing Person training in Dorset Police**

³¹ The Risk Management Unit (RMU, now known as FIB24) is based in the Dorset Police Control Room. Their role is to research intelligence relating to incidents and individuals.

³² “Message” in this context refers to police incident logs.

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- 214. The Dorset Police Performance Budget and Projects Officer has advised that Dorset Police moved to a new training system in 2010, following which the old system was archived as a “display only” feature on the force HR system.
 - 215. She stated that, due to a system fault, a person’s training history on the old system may include training courses that they had not attended. She explained that it was currently not possible to access the system to interrogate the data and ascertain what training officers did attend prior to 2010.
 - 216. The available training records indicate that some officers were required to complete training packages provided by the National Centre for Applied Learning Technologies (NCALT); however, not all officers completed these packages.
 - 217. FIC A’s training record shows that he was required to complete an NCALT e-learning training package titled, “*Public Protection - Missing Daughter*”, but did not do so.
 - 218. Dorset Police Professional Standards Department (PSD) has advised that officers do not face repercussions if they fail to complete NCALT training.

> **Account provided by former Force Incident Commander (FIC) A (now retired)**

- 219. FIC A provided a statement to the IOPC on 3 June 2019.
- 220. He stated that, at the time Gaia went missing, he had been an FIC for approximately seven years and was regarded as one of the most experienced FICs in Dorset.
- 221. He stated that there was limited on-the-job training when he first started as FIC, but that new FICs were required to complete an initial week-long Tactical Firearms Commander training course focusing on incidents where there was a high level of risk. He stated that he then shadowed another FIC for a few shifts, and started performing the role once he was considered competent.
- 222. He stated that one of his duties as FIC was to undertake an initial assessment of new missing person reports. He stated that, when doing so, he would assess the available information with reference to the NDM and College of Policing guidance. He stated that he was fully aware of the College of Policing missing person risk categories, and believed that he had an “*excellent*” knowledge of them and the ability to apply them.
- 223. He stated that he would only grade a missing person as high risk if there was an immediate and real danger of that person coming to very serious, potentially fatal harm. He stated that this could include (but would not necessarily be limited to) a missing person who had left a suicide note, a very young child with no understanding of danger, or an elderly person with dementia.
- 224. He stated that in Gaia’s case, he reviewed all of the available information and noted that Constable B was already aware of the situation and was undertaking enquiries.

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225. He stated that he was aware that Gaia was reportedly not in possession of a mobile phone, and had shouted, *“I hate this life”* as she left³³. He stated that he did not perceive that comment as a threat to take her life, but rather as *“an expression of her opinion of how she viewed her life”*.
226. He stated that he had no reason to doubt his risk assessment, and having reflected on the incident, he still believed he had made the correct decision based on the information that was available to him at that time.
227. He stated that he was not aware of the email from Surrey Police (in which Gaia was graded as high risk) when he completed his initial risk assessment, and there was no mention of that email on the log³⁴.
228. He stated that if he had been aware of that email, it may *“potentially”* have affected his decision, and he *“may”* have graded Gaia as high risk.
229. He explained that the Critical Incident Inspector would carry out a further review of the FIC’s initial risk assessment if the missing person had not been located following the initial visit by officers.
230. He confirmed that it would have been his responsibility to make the Critical Incident Inspector aware of the log. He stated that it appeared he had not done so, which appeared to be an oversight by him; however, he had recorded an instruction on the log to this effect at 7.03pm (see below) and the Dispatcher or “Buddy” would normally ensure that any actions or tasks were implemented.

> **Case review by the College of Policing**

- ████ 231. The IOPC asked the College of Policing to comment on whether the initial risk assessment and subsequent review were appropriate. A review was undertaken by a Sergeant from the Police National Search Centre (PNSC). His findings and conclusions are outlined in a report dated 15 October 2018. Among other things, he observed that:
- FIC A conducted the initial risk assessment, in accordance with the Dorset Police Missing Person Policy. However, the next documented review (by the Critical Incident Inspector) took place just over six hours later. If this was the first review of the initial risk assessment, then it was not conducted in accordance with force policy (which states that the review should take place within six hours).
 - The initial risk assessment of medium was *“flawed”* and *“questionable”* in light of Gaia’s known mental health issues, her severe epilepsy, the

³³ As outlined previously, Gaia had in fact said this earlier that morning, but FIC A could only rely on the information that was available to him at the time.

³⁴ An audit was undertaken at the IOPC’s request [T81] which confirmed that FIC A had not accessed the email from Surrey Police via Niche. The Computer Audit Officer commented, *“The fact that the email came into the FCC generic inbox at 16:59hrs on 7th Nov 2017 and forwarded from the FCC inbox direct to [the Control Room Supervisor] at 17:02hrs, means that [FIC A] could have reviewed the email in the FCC inbox before moving it through to [the Control Room Supervisor]... [or] he may have seen the wording of the email in the indent [sic] log or OEL / misper report is [sic] the text has been repeated / copied to these documents.”*


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recent inappropriate Facebook messages, her mental and emotional state at the time of her disappearance, and finally the fact that it was cold, wet and dark, and she was not dressed appropriately for the weather conditions.

- The Dorset Police Missing Persons Policy does not include the category of “Missing Persons who are Ill or Injured”, as per national guidance. If this category had been included in the policy, it may have assisted with the risk assessment, as Gaia had physical and mental health issues.
- Overall, Dorset Police Missing Persons Policy contains a number of inconsistencies and contradictions, and uses terms such as “*consider*” and “*where required*”, which are unclear and potentially confusing. The PNSC Sergeant recommended an immediate review of the policy, with input from appropriate subject matter experts.

> Analysis of the evidence

232. FIC A assessed Gaia as medium risk at 6.58pm on 7 November 2017. At 1.24am on 8 November 2018, the Critical Incident Inspector upgraded the assessment to high risk on the grounds that Gaia had not taken her medication, and may have collapsed.
233. Gaia’s family complained that Dorset Police should have recognised early on that she was high risk, as they knew she was vulnerable.
234. They alleged that the initial risk assessment was influenced by assumptions stemming from the rape investigation, and expressed their belief that Gaia might have been found alive if she had been treated as high risk from the outset.
235. This investigation has not identified any evidence to suggest that the initial risk assessment was influenced by the rape investigation. FIC A was not involved in that investigation, and did not reference it in his rationale at the time, or in his subsequent statement. (As outlined in the report pertaining to the rape investigation, the IOPC also found no evidence to support a finding that the officers who investigated Gaia’s allegations were influenced by assumptions or prejudices about her.)
236. As to whether FIC A’s risk assessment was appropriate: the APP states that a missing person should be graded as high risk if the risk of serious harm is deemed very likely, and as medium risk if the risk of harm is deemed likely but not serious. The APP defines a risk of serious harm as, “*A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.*” In this respect, Dorset Police policy mirrors the APP.
237. The following information was available on the missing persons log at the time of FIC A’s risk assessment:

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- Gaia was mentally unstable as the result of a rape two years ago, was taking medication for epilepsy, and suffered from short term memory loss, which caused her to become confused.
 - She did not have a mobile phone with her, and potentially did not have any money.
 - She had been very angry when she left the house, and had shouted, “*I hate this life.*”³⁵
 - Less than a month before, police were called after Gaia left Poole Hospital despite “*needing sectioning*” and started screaming at members of the public outside. Gaia was suicidal on this occasion.

238. The following additional relevant information was recorded on the log of 2 November 2017:

- Gaia had recently received sexually explicit messages and images from a male on Facebook, which caused her distress and brought up memories of the rape.
- She had run out of the house at approximately 3.50pm.
- She was delusional when she left the house, and believed she was pregnant by an old friend, possibly as the result of a flashback.
- Gaia’s mother had contacted Surrey Police to report Gaia missing, and the email from Surrey Police was attached to the log.

239. In addition to the above, FIC A could reasonably be expected to have been aware that it was dark, and that the weather was poor, and that temperatures were low at night, due to the time of year.

240. FIC A recorded his rationale as follows:

“The missing person is vulnerable due to being mentally [sic] unstable and highly emotional as a result of a rape 2 yrs ago. She also suffers epilepsy for which she takes medication, short term memory loss and flashbacks. She is struggling to deal with the rape matter and is currently receiving counselling [sic] to assist with this. She has also been the victim of inappropriate [sic] messages and images being sent via FB messenger which has sparked the flashbacks to the rape incident. This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies to trace the missing person and support the person reporting. Critical Incident Inspector to oversee enquiries and review risk and enquiries once full details have been obtained.”

241. FIC A has now retired, but provided a statement to the IOPC. He explained that he would only grade a missing person as high risk if there was an immediate and real danger of that person coming to very serious, potentially fatal harm. He gave examples of a missing person who had left a suicide note, or an elderly person with dementia.

³⁵ As outlined previously, it has since been established that Gaia said this earlier in the morning. However, this was the information that was available to FIC A at the time.

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242. He stated that he did not perceive Gaia's comment, "*I hate this life*" as a threat to take her life, but rather as "*an expression of her opinion of how she viewed her life*".
243. FIC A did not explain why he drew a distinction between an elderly person with dementia, and a young, vulnerable, mentally disordered person suffering from short term memory loss, confusion and seizures. He also did not reference the poor weather conditions and the fact that it was dark, either in his risk assessment rationale or in his subsequent statement. He did not explain why he perceived someone who had gone missing after shouting "*I hate this life*" as being at lower risk than someone who had made an overt threat to self-harm.
244. FIC A further stated that he was not aware of the email from Surrey Police when he completed his initial risk assessment, as there was no mention of that email on the log. He stated that his decision "*may*" have been different if he had been aware of this email.
245. While the email was not referenced on the missing person log, the Control Room Supervisor recorded on the log from 2 November 2017 that an email had been received from Surrey Police, and was attached to the log.
246. The evidence indicates that FIC A did read the log of 2 November 2017, as he referenced the inappropriate images and Gaia's flashbacks in his risk assessment rationale, and recorded his risk assessment rationale on the log of 2 November 2017. It has been established that FIC A did not access the email from Surrey Police via Niche, but it was not possible to establish whether he read the email when it was in the FCC inbox. Nor was it possible to establish whether he read the copied text in the incident log or Occurrence Enquiry Log (OEL).
247. FIC A stated that he had no reason to doubt his risk assessment, and still believed he had made the correct decision based on the information that was available to him.
248. In his statement to the IOPC, the Critical Incident Inspector expressed the view that Gaia should have been graded as high risk from the outset, based on the information that was available at the time of the initial risk assessment.
249. The PNSC Sergeant who later reviewed the case also expressed the view that FIC A's risk assessment was "*flawed*" and "*questionable*" in light of Gaia's known mental health issues, her severe epilepsy, the recent inappropriate Facebook messages, her mental and emotional state at the time of her disappearance, and finally the fact that it was cold, wet and dark, and she was not dressed appropriately for the weather conditions³⁶.

³⁶ It should be noted that FIC A was not aware at the time of his risk assessment that Gaia had left her coat at Female A's house. However, an entry by Constable B at 7.43pm (following FIC A's risk assessment) stated that Gaia was wearing a very light jacket.

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250. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether FIC A's risk assessment was reasonable, appropriate, and commensurate with the available information and APP guidelines.
 251. The PNSC Sergeant further noted that the Critical Incident Inspector's review took place over six hours after FIC A's risk assessment, contrary to Dorset Police policy, which states that the Critical Incident Inspector must conduct a further risk assessment within six hours.
 252. The Critical Incident Inspector reviewed the risk assessment at 1.24am, which was not significantly outside the six hour target timeframe. However, if this review had taken place sooner, Gaia would have been upgraded to high risk sooner.
 253. The Critical Incident Inspector explained that he had been busy dealing with other commitments, and first became aware of the case at 1.16am. He stated that he had previously raised concerns about flaws in the process for allocating incidents to Critical Incident Inspectors. It is not clear from the evidence whether this process has since been reviewed.
 254. FIC A confirmed that it would have been his responsibility to alert the Critical Incident Inspector to the log, and that he had not done so. He stated that he had recorded an instruction on the log to this effect at 7.03pm (see below) and that the Dispatcher or their "Buddy" would normally ensure that instructions such as this were implemented.
 255. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether FIC A should reasonably have done more to ensure that the log was brought to the attention of the Critical Incident Inspector within a reasonable timeframe.
 256. As outlined previously, the evidence is not sufficient to enable us to express a view on whether Gaia might have been found alive if she had been treated as high risk from the outset.
 257. However, even if a high risk missing person report had been created following Gaia's aunt's call at 4.37pm, it was already growing dark by then, and there is no evidence to suggest that Gaia headed back into Swanage after the CCTV sighting on Priests Road at 3.59pm.
 258. It is unlikely that ground searches would have been attempted along the coastline in the hours of darkness, due to the risks and the poor visibility. It is possible that NPAS might have been dispatched sooner (depending on their availability), and I have discussed this aspect elsewhere in the report.

> Searches by the National Police Air Service (NPAS)

> Contemporaneous evidence

259. An incident log entry by Constable B at 7.43pm on 7 November 2017 states:
“Due to the rural location, would it be possible the [sic] get NPAS up to look for heat source.”
260. An entry at 7.48pm states:
“Have spoken to [Constable B] re locations for NPAS to search. He has asked for the rural areas of the outskirts of the town to be searched. Areas like the Downs and Old Harry rocks. Female is on foot, but could be in hyper state so could have walked further than expected.”
261. An entry at 7.55pm states that NPAS had been asked to search Old Harry Rocks, the Downs, and the outskirts of town.
262. An update at 8.10pm states that NPAS would be taking off shortly in order to assist with a search of the coastline and cliff tops.
263. NPAS footage shows that the first flight started at 8.40pm, and ended at 9.10pm. At 8.44pm, a faint heat source can be seen in the location where Gaia was later found [REDACTED]. There are several other comparable or brighter heat sources in the surrounding undergrowth and adjoining field.
264. An incident log entry at 9.30pm states that NPAS had searched the area east of Dancing Ledge, with a negative result.
265. An entry at 2.38pm on 8 November 2017 states:
“I have liased [sic] with [the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer] (who is also police staff [REDACTED]) [he] suggests that the Townsend nature reserve would be difficult to search on foot and it would be of benefit if NPAS could do that area. I agree with that assessment could a request be passed to NPAS as to whether they could attend and check that area before darkness. If misper went due south from her last known position she may cross that area if she was heading for the coast. I am aware there is no intel she was heading that way but as it is suggested that she likes the cliff top area it would be worth checking. Please can top table be asked to task NPAS if agreed. Thanks.”
266. An incident log entry at 3.10pm states:
“1 area not searched. Footpath from Priests Way to [Gaia’s home address]. Very long footpath that PCSOs will check. Requesting NPAS for this pls.”
267. Footage shows that the NPAS searched the area south of Swanage along Priests Way to Langton Matravers between 5.46pm and 6.18pm on 8 November 2017. Again, a thermal imaging camera was used during the search.

- 268. An incident log entry at 6.06pm on 8 November 2017 states that NPAS had searched the open areas from south of Swanage to Langton Matravers with a negative result.
- 269. An entry at 6.19pm states that NPAS had searched St George's fields, the train line as far as Hurston Holt, and the pond at the end of Cow Lane, with a negative result.
- 270. An entry at 6.45pm states that NPAS had searched the areas around the caravan parks at the top of Priests Road, the open areas of Townsend Reserve, and Priests Way west as far as South Barn, including the fields on either side, plus King George's field, Kirkwood Park and car park.
- 271. NPAS carried out the first daylight search between 12.03pm and 12.23pm on 9 November 2017. The flight commentary does not mention which areas were searched, but the footage shows residential areas, marshland, wooded areas, some fields, and outbuildings.
- 272. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 7.45am on 10 November 2017 lists the areas searched thus far. The PoISC recorded that the open areas south of Swanage to the coast had been searched by NPAS in daylight and using thermal imagery, and that NPAS should conduct a wider area search as a priority.
- 273. NPAS carried out a further daylight search between 12.50pm and 12.56pm on 10 November 2018. The search covered Durlston Country Park, and open areas to the south and west of Harman's Cross up to Corfe Castle.
- 274. An unsigned and untimed policy log entry on 13 November 2017 states that NPAS had expanded their search to include the area between Swanage and Langton Matravers and the coastline.
- 275. NPAS carried out a daytime search of the area where Gaia's clothing was found between 11.21am and 12.46pm on 16 November 2017. They were asked to record footage of the clothing and surrounding area, and to check the trees, bushes and cliffs nearby.
- 276. At 12.40pm, an NPAS officer reported:

"No trace, I'm afraid. We've cleared the base of the cliffs and the rocks from Anvil Point to Seacombe Cliff so far. We've also done the two footpaths that run between the cliffs between those two points, there's also no trace. We've got video and photographs of the clothing in situ and we are going to have to head back to Bournemouth now to refuel."
- 277. Another NPAS officer subsequently clarified that they had searched the area 300 or 400 metres on either side of the scene.

> **Account provided by Constable B**

- 278. Constable B provided a statement to the IOPC on 29 July 2019.

- [REDACTED]
279. He stated that he requested support from NPAS, which was originally denied, but he subsequently spoke to a colleague in NPAS, Tactical Flight Officer (TFO) A, who agreed to assist.

> **Account provided by the NPAS Training and Standards Manager**

- 280. The NPAS Training and Standards Manager provided a statement to the IOPC on 27 November 2018.
281. He explained that an NPAS crew consists of three people: the Pilot, who navigates the aircraft; the front seat TFO, who controls all optical and thermal cameras; and the rear TFO, who liaises with the Control Room and officers on the ground and makes tactical decisions about searches and navigation.
282. He stated that if the crew were to identify a heat source of interest during a night time aerial search, the Front Seat TFO would use the aerial searchlight to investigate further, while the pilot positioned the aircraft in such a way as to provide the best view. He stated that if the heat source were deemed suitable for further investigation, the Rear Seat TFO would guide officers to the area.
283. He stated that the interpretation of heat sources during a night-time search was *“very much based upon experience and anomaly detection and investigation”*. He stated that open areas are relatively simple to search, whereas embankments and wooded or overgrown areas are very difficult, as overhangs and foliage make it harder for the sensors to detect heat sources. He stated that a physical check is always recommended if there is any doubt as to the nature of a heat source.
284. He stated that aerial searching is *“not an exact science”*, and if a person does not want to be found, or is unable to emerge from cover, or is obscured from view from the air, it is likely that they would not be found by aerial searching alone.
285. He stated that between 8.40pm and 9.10pm on 7 November 2017, NPAS searched the cliff tops, coastal path and open areas from Dancing Ledge to the Sandbanks Ferry [REDACTED]
286. He was provided with a copy of the footage from this search. Initially, he was not told where Gaia was found, but was asked to comment on whether the helicopter crew had missed any opportunities to investigate further. He stated:

“From my examination of the footage, my initial interpretation of the conduct of the search, the ‘high level’ search area highlighted was covered with the thermal sensor. It is also evident from the footage that a large number of smaller heat sources are visible throughout the search. It is also clear that larger livestock and sheep / goats were easily visible in open areas hence a person would also be clearly visible if they were in an open area. It is also clear that being coastal there were a number of roosting birds located and negated (through size but also location) throughout the search and other warmer sections of footpaths with exposed rock / benches or different terrain which in themselves give off different heat signatures. On viewing the

[REDACTED]

footage, I saw no evidence of heat anomalies that were not checked which would have warranted further investigation at that time.”

287. He was then provided with the co-ordinates marking the location where Gaia was found. At this location, a faint heat source is visible in the NPAS footage [REDACTED] He stated:

“The heat source identified to me... was ‘on the screen’ for 14 seconds but was not actively investigated. The open fields above show cattle / livestock clearly. A still image however does not give the entire picture of what was occurring at that time within the aircraft. Crews need to communicate with one another and invariably attentions can be drawn away from the screens for something happening inside the cockpit. The fact that the crosshairs don’t go over the heat source identified doesn’t mean that it wasn’t looked at but may have been discounted due to its size and shape relatively quickly given the extensive nature of the search... the relief being searched was not all open area and in fact consisted of quite steep slopes and dense undergrowth that thermal imagery cannot see through effectively.”

288. He noted that it was not possible to say with certainty that the small, indeterminate heat source shown in the footage was Gaia. He stated that, based on his knowledge and experience of police air operations and aerial searches, he believed the NPAS search was proportionate to the information available at that time.

> Account provided by Tactical Flight Officer (TFO) A

- 289. TFO A provided a statement to the IOPC on 28 March 2019.
290. He stated that he spoke with Constable B by phone sometime during the evening of 7 November 2017. He stated that at that time, there was no information available regarding where Gaia might have gone, but it was agreed NPAS would search the cliffs from Dancing Ledge to Sandbanks and the chain ferry.
291. He stated that this was a vast area, but his main concern was to check the immediate danger areas on the cliffs. He stated that anyone walking on the cliffs would be visible to them, and they would then be able to guide officers on the ground to the location. He stated that it was cold and dark by the time they took off, and it would have been unusual to see anyone on the cliffs.
292. He stated that they saw cattle and deer during the search, but no sign of Gaia. He stated that they reviewed the footage from the search following their return to base, and were satisfied that they would not have missed Gaia if she had been out in the open.

> Account provided by Tactical Flight Officer (TFO) B

- 293. TFO B provided a statement to the IOPC on 14 May 2019.
294. He stated that they were tasked to assist with the search for Gaia on the evening of 7 November 2017. He stated that NPAS was not automatically

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300. IOPC investigators arranged to fly over the area between 8.30pm and 9.35pm on 24 April 2019. During the flight, several heat signatures were observed in the same area which appeared to be given off by rocks ██████████
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 301. The investigators also observed a small animal (believed to be a badger) whose heat signature disappeared when it went into the undergrowth. This sighting demonstrated the thickness of vegetation in the area, and the difficulty of detecting heat sources underneath vegetation.
 302. Based on this scene visit, the IOPC investigator formed the opinion that the heat signatures ██████████ were given off by exposed rocks.
 303. On 25 April 2019, IOPC investigators walked the route that Gaia was believed to have taken on 7 November 2017 ██████████ They measured the distance from Priests Road to the scene as approximately 1.47 miles (i.e. approximately 2365 metres). It took investigators approximately 25 minutes of brisk walking to cover this distance. Based on this, they estimated that if Gaia had walked directly to the scene from her last known position on Priests Road, she would have arrived before the time of the NPAS flight.

> Analysis of the evidence

304. Gaia's family stated that they informed the police at a very early stage that Gaia would be likely to go to Priests Way and Dancing Ledge. They stated that the police assured them this area had been searched thoroughly in the first 48-72 hours, using search dogs and thermal imaging cameras, and that if Gaia had been there, "*we would have found her.*"
305. While dogs were deployed during the search, this investigation has not identified any evidence that dogs were used to search area A12³⁷ prior to the discovery of Gaia's clothing on 16 November 2017.
306. We do not know when, where or in what circumstances the family was allegedly told that the abovementioned areas had been searched by dogs, or that Gaia would have been found if she had been there. In the absence of further details, it has not been possible to ascertain exactly what was said or by whom.
307. NPAS assisted with the search on several occasions. In particular, they searched the coastline between 8.40pm and 9.10pm on 7 November 2017, at the request of Constable B. At 8.44pm, a faint heat signature was detected in the location where Gaia was later found ██████████ It was not investigated at the time.
308. This evidence was put to the NPAS crew, who explained that NPAS thermal imaging cameras were used primarily to search for people out in the open. TFO B stated that the heat signature may instead have been caused by an animal, or by a rock cooling at a different rate to its surroundings.

³⁷ A12 was the area where Gaia was found.

- ████████████████████
309. The NPAS Training and Standards Manager confirmed that undergrowth can obscure heat signatures, and that exposed rock or other variations in terrain can give off different heat signatures. He stated that it was not possible to say with certainty that the small, indeterminate heat source in the footage was Gaia. He expressed the view that the NPAS search was proportionate to the information available at that time.
310. ██████████ shows multiple faint heat signatures and variations in temperature in the area, including some larger or brighter than the one circled.
311. Similar heat signatures were seen in two images taken during the later flight in April 2019 ██████████, although there were fewer in the first of those two images. This may be due to differences in temperature and weather conditions at the time of the two flights.
312. The officer who found Gaia confirmed that there were a number of large rocks nearby (see below), and there is a rocky area in the foreground of the first image ██████████. These images also show that Gaia was in an area of thick undergrowth, which may have obscured any heat sources at that location. During the NPAS flight in April 2019, the IOPC investigator observed an animal on the thermal imaging camera screen, which could no longer be detected by the camera when it entered the undergrowth.
313. It is not within the remit of the IOPC to express a view on whether the heat signature in the NPAS footage was Gaia. However, when considering the sufficiency of the NPAS search, the decision maker may wish to note the following:
- The heat signature in question was small, faint, motionless and not obviously human in shape. It was roughly circular, whereas a person lying on the ground would have an elongated heat signature.
 - There were multiple similar heat signatures in the area, even discounting the herd of livestock in the field to the north.
 - The NPAS had been tasked with searching a large area of coastline, and it would not have been feasible for them to investigate all heat sources of a nature similar to the one shown.
314. NPAS carried out further searches in other areas in the days that followed, with a negative result.
315. On 16 November 2017, following the discovery of Gaia's clothing, NPAS searched the area within 300 or 400 metres of the clothing. On this occasion, they would again have flown over the area where Gaia was later found. However, Gaia was deceased by this point and hidden in dense undergrowth, so would not have been visible from the air.

> Searches on the ground during the first twenty-four hours

> Contemporaneous evidence

316. At 6.32pm on 7 November 2017, the incident log was updated with a physical description of Gaia, and a description of her clothing. It was noted that she did not have a mobile phone.
317. At 6.34pm, the Call Taker graded the log as high priority.
318. An entry by Constable B at 6.55pm states:
“I’m currently at the females [sic] HA³⁸. Female is not here, family friend [REDACTED] is present, he has shown me around the house and the female is not present. Loft area not checked as have no ladder.”
319. An entry at 6.56pm states that a photograph of Gaia had been provided.
320. At 7.03pm, FIC A recorded that officers should search Gaia’s home address and the area where she was last seen, and liaise with the Lost Person Search Manager (LPSM) as necessary. He recorded that a description of Gaia should be broadcast, and checks undertaken with local hospitals. He recorded that the Critical Incident Inspector was to review the risk once full details had been obtained from the family³⁹.
321. An entry by Constable B at 7.43pm states:
“We have search [sic] HA, apart from the loft area, which I cannot get access to. Her family are concerned that she has epilepsy, she has gone out in a very light [sic] jacket and could have possibly had a seizure.”
322. An entry at 8.23pm states that Constable B had spoken to Female B, and had advised her and her father to contact the police if they saw Gaia.
323. In other entries, Constable B suggested conducting social media checks and enquiries with taxi firms, and potentially checking pubs in case Gaia had sought shelter inside.
324. In an entry at 8.27pm, Constable B recorded that he would continue checking areas in Swanage where Gaia may try to seek shelter. There is no record of the locations he visited.
325. At 10pm, FIC A completed an FIC handover document for FIC B. The section titled “Mispers” was blank.
326. An incident log entry at 12.29am on 8 November 2017 states:

³⁸ Home address.

³⁹ This is the entry that FIC A stated was an instruction that should have been actioned by the Dispatcher.

████████████████████

“Further call [from Gaia’s aunt] stating she has driven around all the local roads and cannot find misper. Inf⁴⁰ wanted to know if we were searching for her and what we were actually doing. Inf cant [sic] think of any more info to tell us. Inf just extremely [sic] worried as misper needs her meds and is frightened that she might of [sic] had a sezure [sic].”

327. At 1.24am, the Critical Incident Inspector upgraded the report to high risk. He requested that the LPSM be contacted, and set the following actions:
- Officers to reattend Gaia’s address in case she had returned.
 - Risk Management Unit (RMU) to research social media for Gaia and Male A, and ascertain when she was last active.
 - Taxi firms to be contacted.
 - Further hospital checks to be undertaken.
328. Subsequent entries indicate that these enquiries were completed, with a negative result.
329. An entry by FIC B at 1.33am states that there was no LPSM on duty, and that the on-call PolSA should be notified if further checks of Gaia’s home address proved negative.
330. A policy log entry by PolSA A at 1.40am states that there is currently insufficient information to task volunteer agencies such as DorSAR and HM Coastguard.
331. An untimed, unsigned policy log entry prior to that lists BBC weather data for the area. According to the data, sunset was at 4.32pm, and by 10pm, temperatures were expected to drop to three degrees Celsius (no data was provided for earlier in the day). The forecast for that evening was:
- “Cloud will thicken through this evening and overnight with some patchy light rain or drizzle at times. The blanket of cloud will help temperatures stay well above freezing, keeping a frost at bay.”*
332. In his summary of the search, the PolSC recorded that the weather at that time was wet, with wind speeds of up to 12mph along the coast. He recorded that temperatures were forecast to drop to 2 degrees, but that the wind chill had been calculated as approximately minus two degrees.
333. An incident log entry by PolSA A at 2.13am states:
- “PolSA review - females in the age range with suicidal tendencies are most likely to harm themselves by hanging, jumping from height ie cliffs, bridge building etc. 50% of females travelling on foot are found within 1.5km of the PLS⁴¹. Approx. 17% will return home of their own accord, approx. 15% will go to a friend’s address and approx. 8% will go to relatives. The majority though are found wandering the streets. At this time the place last seen needs to be clarified. Is it the Swanage address? Has this address been searched? Once place last seen established a full open door search⁴² of the premises is to be completed, a full 300 metre search of the area around the place last seen.*

⁴⁰ Informant.

⁴¹ Place Last Seen.

⁴² An ‘open door’ search entails opening all doors and searching all rooms, outhouses, sheds, lofts, cupboards, wardrobes and drawers.

[REDACTED]

This includes entering gardens etc and cannot be done from a vehicle. Areas to consider - King George's field, Swanage seafront. There is some inv work to be completed. Does the misper have a mobile phone, have they got it with them, have we done SPOC⁴³ work on the phone? Have we got the IP address for her internet and have we completed checks around these? These will lead to a better defined search area."

334. An incident log entry at 2.17am states:

"[REDACTED] have spoken to [Gaia's aunt]. She has had no further contact. She has already been to [Male A's] address and chatted with him, they have been out looking for him [sic] tonight. We have been to [Male A's address] - no answer at the door. Both addresses are leaving the door unlocked and lights on, should the female return."

335. Subsequent entries state that public toilets had been checked, and all were locked.

336. A policy log entry by PoLSA A at 2.35am⁴⁴ states:

"Spoke to D2⁴⁵, PLS still not confirmed. Advice given re once PLS known, full open door search, 300m search of surrounding area. D2 was happy with this advice. D2 overseeing Misper enquiry."

337. A log entry at 5.44am states:

"Incident awareness sent to UT in 0581⁴⁶."

338. FIC B completed an FIC handover document for FIC C at 7am on 8 November 2017. The section titled "Mispers" states:

"High risk Gaia Pope (19 years). Last seen around 15:50 yesterday when she left her aunt's house in Swanage in a distressed state. Originally assessed as medium risk. Has NO mobile, vehicle or cash with her or medication for diabetes. Addresses have been checked and NPAS was up. PoLSA has reviewed. Needs media release this morning but awaiting family approval."

339. An incident log entry at 8.06am states that officers should commence a three hundred metre search outwards from Gaia's aunt's address, and should speak to the Mental Health Team and Gaia's GP. The entry states that an Officer in the Case (OIC) would be appointed to "drive action [forward]".

340. A media release was issued at 8.23am, which included a description of Gaia and the clothes she was wearing when last seen.

341. An incident log entry at 8.37am states:

"CCTV - PCSO [REDACTED] as been asked to assist with CCTV enquiries in Swanage. Attend the work address of [an associate of Gaia's] and 300m search - I have printed the map but note this incorporates a

⁴³ Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in this context refers to the analysis of mobile phone communications data.

⁴⁴ As outlined below, PoLSA A went off duty following this entry.

⁴⁵ D2 is the Critical Incident Inspector.

⁴⁶ This means that the incident was flagged for the attention of the Bronze Commander.

[REDACTED]

significant proportion of Swanage town centre incorporating [sic] hundreds of premises. I will not be able to complete this myself today, and as such [REDACTED] is assisting and PC [REDACTED] and PCSOs [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] will be asked to assist. Prior to the search I will look to action the iTask⁴⁷ slide and liaise with CMHT⁴⁸ and GP.”

342. An entry by Constable G at 9.05am states:

“I have spoken with [Gaia’s aunt] and introduced myself. She advises the only address in Swanage she think the misper would go to is [Male A’s] or [Female B’s]. Before we begin with the search etc. I note that we received a call from [a friend of Gaia’s, [REDACTED] who advised she’d heard the misper was at [Male A’s] address. I note [REDACTED] attended [Male A’s address] last night but received no answer despite lights being on. I’d suggest this address is probably the most urgent enquiry, and as such [REDACTED] and I will attend this address in the first instance.”

343. An entry at 9.18am states:

“I have spoken with [Gaia’s friend] who advises she spoke to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] between 23.00 and 00.00hrs. [REDACTED] told [Gaia’s friend] that the Misper was with [Male A], but may also have been seeing a man called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I have checked Mispers [sic] Facebook friends and no trace of [REDACTED].”

344. An entry at 9.27am states:

“Misper raised at DIM⁴⁹ meeting. DT FIB⁵⁰ have been provided incident number and will review financial [sic] enquiries and add to the message.”

345. An entry at 10.39am states:

“I have spoken to [REDACTED] She stated that Gaia attended there [sic] address yesterday between 15.30 and 16.00 yesterday. She also banged on the door of [Female A] at [REDACTED]. Gaia was acting very irrational [sic] and was removing her shoes outside the property she then went into [Female A’s house] and stripped to her bra and pants. She then went to leave the address but was convinced [sic] to put her clothes back on. She left [Female A’s address] towards the High Street and was looking for [Female B]. Very panicked and her behaviour was very odd.”

346. An entry at 10.43am states that the above information may indicate that Gaia was suffering from Acute Behavioural Disturbance (ABD). The entry requests that DorSAR be contacted.

347. An entry at 10.45am states that Gaia was wearing a black and red top and no coat.

348. An entry at 11.13am requests that HM Coastguard be contacted.

⁴⁷ iTask alerts patrol officers to look out for persons of interest, including suspects, victims and missing persons.

⁴⁸ Community Mental Health Team.

⁴⁹ Daily Intelligence Meeting.

⁵⁰ Force Intelligence Bureau.

349. At 11.15am, Gaia's mother called to request an update. During the call, she stated that Gaia had been gone all night, and did not have a coat. She provided further information which the Call Handler recorded on the log, but the Call Handler did not record that Gaia did not have a coat.
350. In his summary of the search, the PoISC recorded that at 11.22am, HM Coastguard Control had declined to assist on the grounds that there was insufficient evidence or intelligence to suggest Gaia had headed for the cliffs.
351. An incident log entry by Constable G at 11.39am on 8 November 2017 states:
"All units. Plan of action 300m search from [Female A's address]. Focus on overt roads, back passages."
352. An entry by FIC C at 12pm states that Gaia's GP should be asked whether she had attended her appointment.
353. An entry by Constable G at 12.25pm states:
"Unable to ascertain whether Gaia has her mobile with her - can we please SPOC [REDACTED]"
354. A further entry states that the number had been called, but the phone appeared to be switched off.
355. In his summary of the search, the PoISC recorded that HM Coastguard teams had self-deployed in order to assist with the search.
356. An incident log entry at 12.31pm states that an FIC welfare text to Gaia's number had not been delivered, indicating that either the phone was switched off or the battery was flat.
357. Entries at 12:30pm and 12:36pm on 8 November 2017 state that HM Coastguard and the Police Marine Section would search the areas between Peveril Point and Anvil Point, and the coastline between Old Harry's Rock and Chapman's Pool⁵¹ respectively. Subsequent log updates state that these searches had been completed.
358. In his summary of the search, the PoISC recorded that he had contacted PoISA A at 12.45pm and recalled him to duty for continuity.
359. An incident log entry at 1.15pm states:
"[LPSMs A and B] have viewed the message and concur with the PoISA action timed at 0213hrs and the D2 actions at 0806hrs. What is not totally clear is the correct address of the place last seen, it is believed this was [Female A's address] but needs confirming so a 300 meter⁵² search can be conducted as this is a long message with various names and places that Gaia may or may not go or has been seen at."
360. A subsequent entry states:

⁵² Dorset Police tend to use the American spelling (meter) instead of the UK English 'metre'; this has not been highlighted (with *[sic]*) due to its frequent use.

[REDACTED]

“Misper lives at [REDACTED] with her mum and... sister. Her auntie resides at [address redacted]. Police receive a call (1818 hrs) that at 1530hrs Misper ran out of [Gaia’s aunt’s address] in distress. Quick time enquiries were conducted by [Constable B] inc search of the HA, 099 lifting for search etc. Misper has epilepsy, and is believed to have been having a mental health episode when she went missing as a result of flashbacks to a gang rape⁵³ which she was the victim of. Female graded as high risk as her last comments were around hating this life, mental health aspect and medical welfare.”

361. An entry at 1.21pm states:

“Today [Constable G] and [REDACTED] have undertaken a series of enquiries as follows: attendance at [home address] of friend [Male A] and [REDACTED] (close friends of the family), who identified the misper was seen at [Female A’s] address [REDACTED] at sometime after 1530 hrs. Spoken with [Female A] at locus who advises misper attended baning [sic] on the windows and was invited in. She was irrational and unstable, not making much sense at all. She was sweating profusely and complaining of being too hot, removing her clothes down to her underwear (sign of ABD - medical emergency). [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] She managed to convince the misper to put her clothes back on. Misper then stated she was going to see her friend [Female B] who is a school friend [REDACTED]. Female left her black coat at locus, and left wearing a red and black checked top. She left towards the High Street (pathway opposite Cow Lane) NB - this would be the correct direction for [Female B’s address]. Subsequent attendance at [REDACTED] HA of [Female B and her father]... [Female B] advised she hadn’t seen or heard from the Misper... Call to [Female B] on [REDACTED] who advised she hasn’t seen the Misper in years.”

362. An entry at 1.28pm states:

“Mother had now arrived at [REDACTED] Attendance to speak with mother who is very distressed and difficult to keep on track. She advised that the misper likes the Durlleston [sic] area, Zig Zag⁵⁵, lighthouse and Dancing Ledges [sic]. She may also attend the site of the old St Mary’s Catholic school which is now fenced off, but kids go there to socialise. Aside from [Female B] no friends in Swanage readily identifiable, and unsure where the female may go.”

363. An entry at 1.30pm states that officers had searched the area between Female A’s address and Female B’s address.

364. An entry at 1.33pm states:

“Outstanding actions:

1) 300m search from [Female A’s address] to commence. It may be worth

⁵³ Gaia did not allege that she had been gang raped.

[REDACTED]

⁵⁵ A local coastal path near to where Gaia was found.

[REDACTED]

expanding to a 300m search also from [Gaia's aunt's address] owing to uncertainty over order.

2) Coastal searches as above – Durlston [sic], Zig Zag, Dancing Ledge etc. In hand with Coastguard under direction of [REDACTED].

3) Reattendance at [Gaia's mother's address] to ****search the loft**** will need a ladder.

4) Reattendance at [Gaia's aunt's address] to search the address.

5) Enquiry with [REDACTED] PS [REDACTED] has in hand.

6) [Gaia's friend] (call above) raised concerns around a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Misper has been speaking to. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Need to speak to... [REDACTED] of Misper who is currently [REDACTED] in Poole to obtain more details. Facebook friend search was negative for [REDACTED] (Misper's friends).

7) Marine Unit sweeping the coast.

8) We have not confirmed location of the phone - please can we chase SPOC. This is Virgin Media [REDACTED]. I did call and believe it is off. Perhaps we may get historical mast data?"

365. An entry at 1.37pm states that all calls to Gaia's phone were being forwarded, and that no text messages had been delivered since 3.49pm the day before.

366. An entry at 1.47pm states that Gaia had missed three doses of her epilepsy medication, and that even when taking her medication, she would have approximately ten seizures during the day and twelve during the night. The entry states that this information must be passed to all relevant parties, as it dramatically increased the possibility that Gaia may have come to serious harm.

367. An entry at 1.52pm states:

"Coastguard calling wondering if theres [sic] a PoISA assigned or who is co-ordinating on scene for us as they would like to link them up to talk directly to their OIC on scene."

368. An entry at 2.06pm states:

"Please allocate an officer to attend [REDACTED] and locate the Mispers [sic] [sister] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gaia's sister] needs an intel debrief as to what she knows around her sisters [sic] disappearance [sic]."

369. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 2.15pm states:

"Conversation with [PoISA A]. Advised that he had finished his shift late at 0300hrs due to return back on duty at 1700hrs. Advised that he may be required to come in early to continue search management."

370. An incident log at 2.38pm states (in part):

"[HM Coastguard] have searched Anvil point to Durlston Head and the Downs. They are now searching down towards Dancing Ledge and will continue until they lose daylight."

371. An incident log entry at 2.41pm states:

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“Cousin of misper calling stating 500 photos have been printed of the misper ready to be displayed in the Swanage area. Inft is wanting to know if a PoISA has been assigned and what she and her family can do to help, such as areas to look where officers currently are not. Please can inft be contacted on her mobile.”

372. A policy log entry by PoISA A at 3.02pm states:

“Tel Call to [LPSM A], he stated that he was at Swanage and that he had not been there long, he was being used more as an LSO not LPSM. Advised him to start looking at the mapping systems re poss areas, find details of searches already completed and what was outstanding. He was happy doing this whilst I reviewed the message.”

373. A further entry by PoISA A at 3.05pm states:

“My working hypothesis is that the misper is a Despondent⁵⁶ who has gone voluntarily missing, that may lead into missing ill or injured due to MH issues and epilepsy. This is due to information re previous suicidal tendencies [sic], agitated [sic] state, storming out of her Aunts [sic] address stating “I HATE THIS LIFE”. Recent abusive text messages have reignited memories of being raped and have caused anxiety. The area she was last seen is an urban area, had she had a fit in this area it is likely she would have come to the attention of passing public. She is likely to head somewhere secluded to commit suicide. From mapping there are a number of woods and copses between PLS and her HA. There are still a number of investigative actions to be completed. Once these have been completed then we will consider DorSAR. The weather conditions were poor at the time of Gaia going missing. There was constant rain until 2000hrs, the temperature dropped to 3-4 degrees Celsius in the local area. If she had gotten wet, she would not have had the ability to dry herself out and would be at severe risk of hypothermia. Consideration has to be given to her falling and causing injury and being unable to move on. NPAS had been tasked to cover open areas earlier in the day and returned a negative result.”*

*Please note, this investigation was undertaken a number of years ago, therefore, some of the references to, and language used, around suicide are outdated and would not be described in this way today.

> **Account provided by former Force Incident Commander (FIC) A (now retired)**

374. In his statement dated 3 June 2019, FIC A explained that only high-risk missing person reports would be listed on the FIC handover document, which was why Gaia was not included.

> **Account provided by Constable A**

375. Constable A was an Acting Sergeant at the time of the events under investigation. He provided a statement to the IOPC on 25 January 2019.

⁵⁶ “Despondent” in this context means suicidal and/or at risk of self-harm.

- ████████████████████
376. He stated that on 7 November 2017, he was working a 3pm-11pm shift as Acting Sergeant in Wareham Police Station.
377. He stated that he knew Constable B was due to meet with Gaia to discuss her complaint that a man had sent her inappropriate messages on Facebook. He stated that at approximately 4pm, the Control Room informed him that Gaia had run away and that her family did not know where she was.
378. He stated that he deployed Constable B to Gaia's home address to commence the search and obtain further details.
379. He stated:

"As other officers became available I then sent them to the Swanage area to start to help with the search. They were [Constables C and D] who then helped with the search of the Swanage area, other officers were on duty that night for Purbeck but I can't recall if I sent other officer [sic] to the area as there was other commitment [sic] as well.

As the evening went on Gaia was not located [Constable B] conducted the home address searched [sic]. The duty inspector for the evening was aware and had graded Gaia as high risk.

I became aware that an NPAS unit had been deployed to the area to help conduct a search of the surrounding areas as well as the cliffs and rural areas.

At 2300hrs the Purbeck night car which consisted of [Constables E and F] came on duty and so I briefed them as to what was happening with Gaia Pope and asked them t [sic] make themselves [sic] to deploy to the Swanage area to help with the search however prior to them going to Swanage they were tasked with going to a DA⁵⁷ incident in the Upton area."

- ████████ 380. In a further statement (undated), Constable A stated that the Purbeck section did not have a night turn Sergeant on the night of 7 November 2017, and the next Sergeant would have come on duty at approximately 7am. He stated:

"As there is no night time Sgt at Wareham to the best of my knowledge I would have contacted the night turn Sgt who would have been covering both Poole and The Purbeck [sic] throughout the night. However due to the time factor I cannot remember which Sgt I would have contacted it would have been either [Sergeant A], or [Sergeant B], this would have been a verbal only handover and I would have notified them of any outstanding enquiries within the Purbeck section. The D2 was also aware and he was reviewing what was happening as well."

> Account provided by Constable B

- ████████ 381. In his statement dated 29 July 2019, Constable B outlined his actions on the evening of 7 November 2017. He stated that, in addition to the actions

⁵⁷ The DA (Domestic Abuse) incident in Upton was reported at 11.13pm on 7 November 2017. However, Constables E and F were not allocated to this incident until 12.42am on 8 November 2017, by which time Constable A would have concluded his shift. Constables E and F did not leave the station prior to this.

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recorded on the police log, he had attended the Studland to Poole ferry terminal, with a negative result.

382. He stated that he liaised with Constable (then A/PS) A towards the end of his shift, and believed that he would have updated him regarding the enquiries that he had undertaken. He stated that he booked off duty at 11pm, at which time it was thought Gaia might have been with her boyfriend.

> **Accounts provided by Constables C and D**

- ████ 383. Constable C provided a statement to the IOPC on 17 March 2019.
384. He stated that Constable B informed him of the missing person report at approximately 9pm on 7 November 2017, shortly before their shift was due to end, and asked him and Constable D to “*keep a look out*” for her on their way back to their usual place of work in Bournemouth. He stated that they were provided with a description of Gaia, and were told she was wearing a jacket with a fur-lined hood.
385. He stated that they were told Gaia lived in Worth Matravers⁵⁸, so they drove along that route into Swanage. He stated that it was a dark cold night with very few people walking around, and they drove around Swanage but did not see anyone fitting her description. He stated that they then returned to Bournemouth and went off duty.
- ████ 386. Constable D provided a statement to the IOPC on 7 June 2019. His account was consistent with Constable C’s account, and did not include any further relevant information.

> **Account provided by Sergeant A**

- ████ 387. Sergeant A provided a statement to the IOPC on 28 February 2019, in response to Constable A’s statement that he may have briefed her before going off-duty. She stated that she was not involved in the investigation into Gaia’s disappearance, and was working as a Custody Sergeant in Bournemouth at the relevant time.

> **Account provided by Sergeant B**

- ████ 388. Sergeant B provided a statement to the IOPC on 28 June 2019.
389. He stated that on 7 November 2017, he and Sergeant C covered the night shift in Poole. He stated that, while they were predominantly responsible for the Poole Section, they also took on responsibility for the Purbeck area at midnight when the Sergeant in Wareham went off duty.

⁵⁸ Gaia lived in Langton Matravers, which lies between Swanage and Worth Matravers.

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390. He stated that there was no formal handover procedure, but the Wareham Sergeant would notify them if there was an issue that required action, as due to demand they would not have time to review all open logs and tasks for the Purbeck area.
 391. He stated that sergeants in Wareham rarely contacted them before going off duty, but he would expect to be informed of any high risk missing people, or any incidents where there was an immediate threat, risk or harm.
 392. He stated that Constable (then A/PS) A did not contact him before going off duty.

> **Account provided by Sergeant C**

393. Sergeant C provided a statement to the IOPC on 30 January 2019.
 394. He stated that the Critical Incident Inspector contacted him at approximately 1.15am on 8 November 2017, and informed him that there was a missing person in the Purbeck area whom he was going to categorise as high-risk.
 395. He stated that he had not previously been aware of this missing person report, and it had not been flagged to him by the late turn Sergeant in Wareham.
 396. He stated that the Critical Incident Inspector asked him to task officers in Wareham with further enquiries, and he spoke to Constables E and F and asked them to complete the actions that the Critical Incident Inspector had recorded on the log.
- ████
397. In a further statement dated 7 June 2019, Sergeant C explained that patrol Sergeants in Poole would supervise officers in the Purbeck area after the late turn Purbeck Sergeant concluded his or her shift (usually between 11pm and midnight on weekdays).
 398. He stated that the Purbeck Sergeant would normally notify the Poole Sergeant if there were any incidents that may require further action during the night. He recalled previous occasions when this had happened.
 399. He stated that he would have expected to be told of any incidents that would require further action, particularly high-risk missing person cases where it was likely that immediate taskings would be required. He stated that this was standard practice in Poole.
 400. He stated that Constable A did not contact him before finishing his shift on 7 November 2017, and he did not speak to any of the other officers in Wareham on that night.

> **Accounts provided by Constables E and F**

- ████
401. Constable F provided a statement to the IOPC on 28 February 2019.

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402. He stated that he commenced his shift at approximately 10.45pm on 7 November 2017. He stated that he was aware that Gaia had left an address in Swanage in a distressed state earlier in the day.
403. He stated that at approximately 1.23am on 8 November 2017, the Control Room⁵⁹ tasked them with conducting enquiries in Swanage.
404. He stated that he and Constable E attended Gaia's aunt's address at approximately 1.50am, and she told them she had been out looking for Gaia with help from Male A.
405. He stated that they attended Male A's address at 2.10am, but received no reply.
406. He stated that at 2.20am, they were instructed to check all public toilets in Swanage in case Gaia had gone in to seek shelter. He stated that they drove to several public toilet blocks and he checked the doors, all of which were locked.
407. He stated that they continued driving around Swanage and the surrounding area, and went to a viewpoint that he believed was known as Peveril Point. He stated that they searched the area around the viewpoint on foot, and shone their torches down the cliff. He stated that the weather conditions were cold with high winds, and if a person had been shouting for help, it was unlikely they would have heard it due to the noise from the wind.
- ████ 408. Constable F provided a further statement to the IOPC on 24 July 2019. He stated that he could not recall how he became aware Gaia had been reported missing, and could not recall what he had been doing between the start of his shift and 12.42am (when he was deployed to a domestic incident). He could not recall whether a sergeant had been present at the start of his shift.
- ████ 409. Constable E provided a statement to the IOPC on 2 February 2019. His account was consistent with Constable F's account, and did not include any further relevant information.

> **Account provided by Constable A in interview**

- ████ 410. IOPC investigators interviewed Constable A under misconduct caution on 22 September 2019.
411. In interview, he stated that he had worked as a response officer for 14 years, and since 2017, had acted up as a sergeant for occasional periods of no more than three days. He stated that 7 November 2017 was the fifth time he had acted up.
412. He stated that he completed a week-long sergeants' training course in February or March 2017, which did not cover missing persons. He stated that he had received no other training on the role of a sergeant.
413. He was asked whether he had received any training on missing persons. He stated that he "*probably did in training school*", but did not recall what had

⁵⁹ Sergeant C (one of the night shift Sergeants in Poole) stated that he tasked Constables E and F after the Critical Incident Inspector alerted him to the missing person report.

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been covered. He stated that he was not aware of the College of Policing APP on missing persons.

414. In relation to the events of 7 November 2017, he stated that Constable B informed him at around 5pm (not 4pm as he had originally said in his statement) that Gaia had run away, and that he was going to attend and speak to her family and see if he could locate her quickly.
415. He stated that at that stage, they believed Gaia had run away because she did not want to see her GP, and was indoors somewhere, perhaps with a friend. He stated that they did not think she was outside.
416. He was asked whether it would not have been a high priority to locate Gaia and ensure she did not come to harm. He replied, "*Probably*".
417. He stated that he would have been aware after checking the log that Gaia had been assessed as medium risk. He confirmed that he had inaccurately said in his statement that she had been assessed as high risk, when in fact that had not happened until after his shift ended.
418. He stated that, as he understood it, a medium risk missing person investigation required "*a measured response... you are actively searching for the person but you're not, not everything is getting thrown at you at that stage*".
419. He stated that he recalled receiving updates from Constable B via radio "*on a couple of occasions*", and stated that he was "*quite satisfied*" at the time that the relevant enquiries were being made.
420. He stated that he believed the duty Inspector was also aware, and was co-ordinating the search. He stated that he had been under this impression because the duty Inspector had recorded his risk assessment on the log.
421. He was informed that the risk assessment was completed by the FIC, not the duty Inspector. He acknowledged that he had been mistaken in his belief, which he stated was due to inexperience.
422. He stated that Constables C and D went to help Constable B, but after their shifts ended, nobody else was due on duty in Wareham until around 11pm, "*so it was a case of monitoring what was going on at that time*".
423. He was asked whether he had considered keeping Constables C and D on after their shift finished, as Gaia still had not been found by that point. He stated that he had not considered this, which he attributed to inexperience on his part.
424. He stated that when Constables E and F came on duty, he spoke to Constable E, told him what was happening and "*asked him to help out where possible*". He confirmed that this had been a verbal briefing only.
425. It was put to him that the wording of his statement implied that he had specifically tasked them to help with the search, and that the word "*help*" implied there were already officers searching, when in fact that was not the case.
426. He accepted this, and clarified that he had not allocated specific tasks to Constables E and F.

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427. He was asked whether he believed he had briefed them adequately. He replied, *“Yes. Erm, apart from specifically telling, they were, they were aware, and my understanding was that at that time they would have been helping out. Possibly should have tasked, well, I could have tasked them, but at the point I wouldn’t know where I was tasking them.”*
428. He stated that he was sent to an incident in Winfrith at approximately 9.30pm, for around an hour or an hour and a half. He explained that the Purbeck sergeant would be expected to attend incidents if no other officers were available, as was the case on that evening. He stated that when he returned, he spoke to Constable E again and then went off-duty at around 11.30pm.
429. He was asked when he had become aware of the domestic abuse incident in Upton. He stated:
“I became aware of that just before I was going home, because after speaking with Constable E, erm, he said to me... there’s another incident we need to look at before we go do anything down there. And that’s, that’s how I became aware of that. I said, OK, if you’ve got to deal with that first, you’ve got to deal with that first. It’s only afterwards I’ve looked at it and gone, actually that, they didn’t go there until nearly ten to one in the morning, and this wasn’t graded as a low, why did they go to it in the first place?”
430. He was asked whether it was possible that Constables E and F had not prioritised the search for Gaia because he had not allocated them any specific tasks. He replied, *“Possibly”*.
431. He accepted that he had not made any entries on the missing person log, and acknowledged that he should have done.
432. He was asked what he should have recorded on the log. He replied:
“Tasking of officers. Any phone calls made. Any contact made. Any enquiries that had been made throughout the evening. Erm, possible summary of what we knew so far. What was happening. Erm, and again, any further actions to be carried out. Which is what we do now.”
433. He explained that handovers would typically cover officer whereabouts, anybody in custody who *“needed dealing with”*, and anything *“of a serious note”*. He stated that high risk missing persons would be covered, but *“not necessarily”* medium risk missing persons.
434. He stated that sergeants in Wareham would contact the night shift sergeant in Poole *“as a courtesy, sometimes”* before going off-duty, but not regularly. He stated that they would be expected to notify Poole of any serious incidents, including serious assaults, any arrests that needed to be made, and any high-risk missing persons, because they required more resources and it was likely those resources would have to come from Poole.
435. He stated that he assumed he had spoken to one of the sergeants he had named, *“but I never said I did do it or completely did do”*.
436. He was asked whether, with hindsight, he believed that he had failed that evening. He stated:
“I think I, erm, my best of my abilities at that time, because of the lack of training I had in missing persons and lack of experience as a, as a skipper,

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erm, I, looking back, I should have done better with I, but... at the time I thought I was doing the best I could."

437. He was asked what he had learned from the incident. He stated:
"Make sure you record everything that you do, and make sure that everybody's aware that you have, erm what's potentially you have, and make sure you carry out all the actions necessary to get to a successful conclusion."
438. He stated that he did not plan to undertake the role of Acting Sergeant any more.

> **Account provided by the Critical Incident Inspector**

439. In his statement dated 25 January 2019, the Critical Incident Inspector stated that he wanted to keep all officers on duty in order to progress the search, but was told there were only two officers on duty at Wareham, and the duty Sergeant covering that area was actually in Poole.
440. He stated that there were only limited details on the OEL, and nothing to show what searches had been completed.
441. He stated that he voiced his concerns to the duty Sergeant at Poole, and asked him to progress the investigation. He stated that it was clear neither the Wareham officers nor their supervisors had conducted a handover with the duty Sergeant, as he was unaware of the missing person report.
442. He stated that he wanted to task Poole officers to assist with the search, but was told they were committed with prisoners and other incidents. He stated that he had previously deployed the Wareham team to the area, and had asked the FIC to deploy Operations assets.
443. He stated that he transferred the incident log across to the FIC in order that the Command structure could be agreed. He stated that, for a high risk missing person case, the FIC would assume the role of Silver Commander and he would be the Bronze Commander⁶⁰.
444. He stated that he then briefed FIC B in the Control Room, and they discussed what assets they could deploy, and instructed officers on the night shift to carry out further searches. He stated that they both also wanted to gather further intelligence from family and friends.
445. He stated that he acted on the PoISA's advice, and continued to search the areas around Gaia's home address and places where she may be trying to keep warm, such as public toilets and doorways. He stated that they were all mindful that searching at night would be difficult, particularly without sightings or a specific location.

> **Account provided by Police Search Advisor (PoISA) A**

⁶⁰ This would be the commend structure during the early stages of the missing person investigation; these roles were subsequently assigned to different officers.

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- 446. PoISA A provided an account to the IOPC on 23 February 2019. He stated that he first became aware of the missing person report in the early hours of 8 November 2017, after he had just finished a shift.
 - 447. He stated that he consulted the Grampian Data and iFIND, which are sources of statistical information on missing persons that PoISAs use to identify where to focus a search. He stated that despondent females in Gaia's age group are mostly found hanging, and 50% of those are found within one and a half kilometres of the place they were last seen.
 - 448. He stated that guidance suggests searches should always be conducted at the missing person's home address, and within a 300m radius of the PLS, which at that time was Gaia's aunt's address. He stated that he provided advice to the duty Inspector, and then concluded the log and booked off duty in the knowledge that, if there were any significant changes or new information, the duty Inspector could contact the duty PoISA.
 - 449. He stated that the duty Inspector called him in the early afternoon of 8 November 2017 and recalled him to duty. He stated that he was initially unable to access the system due to IT problems, but spoke to LPSM A and asked him to start the mapping.

> **Account provided by Force Incident Commander (FIC) B**

- 450. FIC B provided a statement to the IOPC on 20 March 2019.
- 451. He stated that his shift as FIC commenced at 10pm on 7 November 2017, and his usual practice on starting a shift would be to contact the Critical Incident Inspectors to discuss resources, their workload, and any missing person enquiries that may be causing them concern. He stated that he did not do so on this occasion, because he was dealing with an incident that required the deployment of armed officers. He stated that this incident was protracted, and was his primary focus until 1.05am on 8 November 2017.
- 452. He stated that the handover form completed by FIC A did not mention Gaia because she had originally been graded as medium risk, and only high risk missing persons would be recorded on the handover form.
- 453. He stated that, until the Critical Incident Inspector called him at around 1.30am, he was unaware that Gaia had been reported missing.
- 454. He stated that the Critical Incident Inspector told him he considered Gaia to be high risk, as she had missed her medication and was at risk of collapse, and he agreed with this rationale.
- 455. He stated that, as it was a rural area, he contacted the on-call PoISA and asked him to review the incident and liaise with the Critical Incident Inspector in order that he could coordinate resources to assist with the search and consider the use of other specialist search resources such as DorSAR.
- 456. He stated that FIC C took over from him at approximately 6.30am on 8 November 2017, and he completed a handover document and verbal briefing.

> **Account provided by Force Incident Commander (FIC) C**

- 457. FIC C provided an account to the IOPC on 31 January 2019. She stated that she initially took on the role of Silver Commander⁶¹ in the search for Gaia.
- 458. She explained that, in the initial stages of a high-risk missing person enquiry, she would assess the risk in line with the NDM and APP, and then set tactics to locate the missing person.
- 459. She stated that her priority was to continue with the searches as per the overnight LPSM review, and to speak with Gaia's associates and friends in case they had seen or heard from her.
- 460. She stated that she appointed an Inspector as the Bronze Commander, and tasked him with locating resources to assist with the search, appointing a point of contact for the family, identifying another LPSM who would be able to take over the role, obtaining a photograph from the family, and obtaining their permission to issue a media release.
- 461. She stated that, once the initial 300m search had been completed from the PLS, she instructed the Marine Unit to commence a coastal search.
- 462. She stated that at 12pm, she instructed officers to check whether Gaia had attended her GP appointment, in which case her GP may be able to provide an insight into her current mental state.
- 463. She stated that at 12.02pm, she instructed the Bronze Commander to task the early turn Weymouth Enhanced Policing Team (EPT) to assist with the searches.
- 464. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
She stated that a text was sent to Gaia but it did not deliver, indicating that either the phone was switched off or the battery had gone flat.
- 465. She stated that at 12.53pm, she asked the force SPOC (i.e. the department that undertakes live cell site tracking of mobile phones) whether they could assist. She stated that the SPOC informed her that Gaia's handset had not received any calls or texts since 3.49pm on 7 November 2017, and accordingly they were not going to undertake live cell site analysis.
- 466. She stated that she "tagged" the incident at 12.56pm, which meant that it would appear on an easily identifiable list on the force Command and Control logs.
- 467. She stated that at 1.13pm, she instructed the RMU to research addresses for possible associates of Gaia as identified by a friend of hers, in case they were able to provide any further information of value.
- 468. She stated that her shift ended at 3pm, and she handed over to FIC A.

⁶¹ This role was later allocated to a different officer for the duration of the missing person investigation.

[REDACTED]

> **Account provided by Constable H**

- 469. Constable H provided a statement to the IOPC on 11 September 2019.
- 470. He stated that his shift started at 7am on 8 November 2017, and from what he could recall, there were four officers (including PCSOs) available that morning, and they were tasked with conducting a 300 metre search in the area where Gaia lived.
- 471. He stated that he recorded in his pocket notebook⁶² that he felt not enough resources were being allocated to the search, given it was taking place in a densely populated area.
- 472. He stated that he raised the matter with his sergeant, who agreed with him. He stated that from what he could recall, the search was more organised after that.

> **Account provided by Constable G**

- 473. Constable G provided a statement on 13 November 2017, while the missing person investigation was still underway.
- 474. He stated that he was tasked with making enquiries into Gaia's disappearance at 8.30am on 8 November 2017.
- 475. He stated that one of the initial lines of enquiry was a 300m search outwards from Gaia's aunt's address. He stated that the area incorporated hundreds of premises and many roads and pathways, and he expressed the view to his sergeant that the area should be searched methodically with oversight from a PoISA or LPSM.
- 476. He stated that at around 9am he spoke with Gaia's aunt, who told him that the only addresses she believed Gaia would go to were Male A's or Female B's addresses.
- 477. He stated that he and a colleague attended Male A's address at around 10.30am and spoke with a relative of Male A, who told them Female A had seen Gaia between 3.30pm and 4pm the previous day, while she was out.
- 478. He stated that he considered the possibility that this was the last sighting of Gaia, in which case the search parameters would change to the area within a 300m radius of Male A's address. He stated that he asked for this information to be passed to the PoISA at 10.41am.
- 479. He stated that he and a colleague subsequently attended Female A's address and obtained an account from her, based on which he formed the view that Gaia may have been suffering from Acute Behavioural Disturbance (ABD); a potentially fatal condition. He stated that he passed this information to the Control Room and requested that DorSAR be called to assist with the search, with a view to locating Gaia as quickly as possible.

⁶² A copy of this pocket notebook entry was provided to the IOPC.

- [REDACTED]
480. He stated that Female A told him Gaia had left in the direction of the High Street, without her jacket, saying she was going to visit Female B. He stated that he seized the jacket, and he and a colleague then attended Female B's address and established that Gaia had apparently never arrived there.
481. He stated that he updated the Control Room, and at 11.13am, he asked them to consider requesting assistance from HM Coastguard to search the coastal area.
482. He stated that he and a colleague attended Gaia's home address at approximately 11.15am, but were unable to search the loft because no ladder was available.
483. He stated that he then liaised with the Bronze Commander, and they agreed that the search should focus on the area around Male A's address. He stated that he spoke to the Control Room again, and emphasised that he was extremely concerned for Gaia's safety, and asked them to confirm that they had contacted a PoISA and DorSAR.
484. He stated that in the early afternoon, he spoke to Gaia's mother, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] He stated that he was able to ascertain that Male A and Female B were Gaia's only real friends in the area, and that she liked to go to Durlston Country Park, the Zig Zag, the lighthouse, and Dancing Ledge. He stated that he also ascertained that young people would regularly gather at the former site of St Mary's Catholic School [REDACTED] to socialise.
485. He stated that he later spoke with Gaia's mother by phone, and she told him that Gaia took anti-convulsant medication twice a day, and usually had ten seizures during the day and twelve during the night, although without medication the number would be considerably higher. He stated that he passed this information to the Control Room at 1.47pm, and expressed concern that this increased the probability of Gaia coming to serious harm.

> **Accounts provided by Lost Person Search Managers (LPSMs) A and B**

- 486. LPSM A provided a statement to the IOPC on 11 March 2019.
487. He stated that the Bronze Commander notified him of the missing person report shortly after 12.30pm on 8 November 2017, and he reviewed the incident log and discussed the circumstances with LPSM B. He stated that the log was around thirty-seven pages long at that time, and it was unclear what areas had been searched, and whether the home address had been searched by a pair of LSOs as per LPSM search procedure.
488. He stated that they decided LPSM B and another LSO would attend Gaia's home address and check the loft and any outbuildings.
489. He stated that he left Weymouth at approximately 1.45pm, and on arriving in Swanage, he spoke with his sergeant and Constable G, who had been co-ordinating the search and local resources. He stated that initially he assisted

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with the search from the PLS, before returning to the police station to commence his role as LPSM.

- 490. He stated that it took some time to collate the actions that had been completed, and to plot and print off the 300m search radius allowing for the two PLS locations (namely Female A's address and Gaia's aunt's address).
- 491. He stated that he also asked local PCSOs to search Priests Way back towards Gaia's home address in Langton Matravers.
- 492. He stated that he then began to complete the LPSM log, updating the resources and areas that had been searched.
- 493. He stated that PoISA A called him at 3.02pm, and they discussed the updates and actions completed so far. He stated that PoISA A was aware that he had been utilised partly as an LSO when he first arrived in Swanage, and advised him to highlight any further search areas and limitations and to ensure that the LPSM log was fully updated.
- 494. He stated that LPSM C arrived at Swanage Police station at around 6pm, and he updated him on the action that had been taken thus far before booking off duty at 7.45pm.
- 495. LPSM B provided a statement to the IOPC on 10 March 2019. His account was consistent with LPSM A's account, and did not include any further relevant information.

> **Account provided by an Enhanced Policing Team (EPT)
Sergeant**

- 496. This officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 30 March 2019. He stated that he and his team were deployed to Swanage at around 1pm, where they awaited instructions from LPSMs A and B, who were formulating a search plan. He stated that there was a large amount of information and intelligence to process, so the search plan took some time to prepare.
- 497. He stated that they were briefed at around 4pm, and then began to search the area within a fifty-metre radius of the junction of Cow Lane and the High Street.
- 498. He stated that they were encouraged to search open ground and conduct house-to-house enquiries, and he was also asked to assess a large pond south of the High Street, between Cow Lane and Hillsea Road.
- 499. He stated that it grew dark at around 5pm, which meant that they had very little time to search with any degree of accuracy. He stated that they halted the search some time after 5pm, having done the best they could in the circumstances.

> **Account provided by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency
(MCA) Senior Coastal Operations Officer**

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500. The MCA Senior Coastal Operations Officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 29 April 2019.
501. He stated that, at midday on 8 November 2017, the Swanage and St Albans HM Coastguard Rescue Teams (CRTs) were tasked to search for Gaia and to maintain the safety of civilian volunteers who were assisting with the search.
502. He stated that there was no specific search plan, but the police asked them to search from Peveril Point to Anvil Point, including any location where a member of the public might go.
503. He stated that both CRTs used the “*hasty search*” method, including “*purposeful wandering*” where the terrain allowed. He stated that their objectives were to search for a missing but alive person, and to cover the allocated search area before nightfall.
504. He stated that the initial search was completed at 2.40pm, and at 2.43pm, the St Albans CRT was tasked to go to Dancing Ledge and search from there to Anvil Point.
505. He stated that he arrived at the scene at 2.50pm, and was concerned that no PoISA was present. He stated that he was also concerned that he had not yet had a face-to-face conversation with police; all communication up until that point had been via the National Maritime Operations Centre (NMOC).
506. He stated that he confirmed that the teams had been utilising a hasty search method, with purposeful wandering where appropriate and feasible. He stated that they were searching for someone who was likely to be relatively easy to find, and in need of rescue, as opposed to someone hidden. He stated that the search techniques they used were not intended to find someone in the location where Gaia was eventually discovered, and would not have found her in that location.
507. He stated that he called the NMOC at 3.26pm, and expressed concern that the intelligence they had received was “*not ideal*”. He explained that he did not know why Gaia had gone missing, and was therefore unable to use behavioural profiling to model her likely actions. He stated that he also did not know why HM Coastguard had been tasked to search that area, as he was not aware of any indication that Gaia might be there.
508. He stated that he discussed the use of an HM Coastguard helicopter to cover the search area, but the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre (ARCC) declined his request due to a lack of evidence that Gaia was actually in that area.
509. He stated that the searches were completed by 5.11pm, and following discussion with the teams, it was decided that the POD was 30% overall. He stated that this information was passed to the NMOC.
510. He stated that the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer and Deputy Station Officer updated the PoISA at 8.37pm regarding the areas searched.
511. He stated that the police later called the Station Officer directly and asked him to attend Swanage Police Station to provide an update. He stated that the Station Officer discussed the POD, and described the searches that had been carried out to date “*in quite a bit of detail*”.

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> **Account provided by the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer**

512. The Swanage Coastguard Station Officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 30 April 2019.
513. He stated that the NMOC tasked his team to search the cliffs and coastline at 12.10pm on 8 November 2017. He stated that there was no further information regarding Gaia's possible whereabouts at that time, but they were aware she had last been seen in Morrison Road.
514. He stated that they decided to focus their search on the area between Peveril Point and Durlston Head, as this would enable them to protect members of the public who may be putting themselves at risk. He stated that they requested support from the St Albans CRT at around 12.50pm, and completed hasty searches in that area by 2.40pm.
515. He stated that he repeatedly asked during that time for a police officer to meet them at the designated rendezvous point and provide further information, such as a description of Gaia's clothing, her direction of travel, points of interest or favourite spots, so that they could focus the search in those areas.
516. He stated that he then had a phone conversation with the Sergeant at Wareham, who could not give him any further information other than that Gaia liked to visit Dancing Ledge. He stated that he was aware members of Gaia's family were making their way to that area, so he agreed with the Sergeant that, due to the fading light and diminished endurance of the search teams, they would finish off the search between Dancing Ledge and Durlston.
517. He stated that the St Albans team searched east from the Dancing Ledge area, and the Swanage team searched west from Durlston Head, in accordance with standard practice.
518. He stated that no police officers attended the rendezvous point throughout this time, and at 5pm, the teams were stood down due to the failing light.
519. He stated that a police search manager called him at around 7pm, and he and his deputy delivered a debrief at Swanage Police Station between 8pm and 12.15am. He stated that they described the searches that had taken place, and provided support to the Area Search Manager based on their local knowledge of the area. He stated that they also deployed a Coastguard Patrol during that time to support the police and DorSAR.
520. He stated:
- "In the early stages of the search on the 8th November 2017 I reported to the NMOC that I was disappointed with response from the Police to the incident. In all my years of searching I have always had a Police officer present to liaise with. It appears that the Police were struggling with manpower. The lack of information didn't help us with our searching and we found more information on Facebook."*

> Case review by the College of Policing

521. The IOPC asked the PNSC Sergeant to comment on:
- Whether the police response and management of the search was in accordance with local and national guidance.
 - Whether any lines of enquiry or resources were not considered.
 - Whether the progress of the search was adequately recorded, specifically the scope, resourcing and outcomes.
522. The PNSC Sergeant noted that PoISA A was consulted at 2.13am on 8 November 2017, in accordance with policy for high-risk cases; however, there was no further PoISA involvement until he returned to duty at around 3pm later that day. He noted that both HM Coastguard and a member of Gaia's family had requested a PoISA earlier that day.
523. He noted that there was little evidence of co-ordinated police activity during the early stages of the search. In particular, he noted that there was no evidence of informed search activity between 2.40am and 5.44am on 8 November 2017, and that records of the progress of the search prior to mid-afternoon of the following day were "*very limited*", although subsequent records of the scope, resourcing and outcomes of the search were clearer.
524. The PNSC Sergeant found that there were "*some gaps in documented reviews and the timeliness of these in line with local, or national guidance.*"
525. He also noted that LPSM A was not utilised in accordance with force policy; instead, policy log entries indicated that he was used as an LSO, rather than for his search coordination expertise.
526. He found that records of the search were of "*mixed quality*"; for example, there were "*discrepancies in the detail of the missing person's home address and when it was searched*". In particular, he noted that three different versions of Gaia's home address in Langton Matravers were recorded in the log, and a further two different versions were recorded in the PoISC summary of the search.
527. The PNSC Sergeant noted that, in his summary of the search, the PoISC recorded that he had recalled PoISA A to duty at 12.45pm on 8 November 2017; however, an entry in the PoISA policy log stated that PoISA A was recalled to duty at 2.15pm.
528. The PNSC Sergeant concluded that there was a lack of timely engagement with relevant specialists, and "*little evidence*" to show that local and national guidance was considered initially. He stated that, as a result, the search effort during the first twenty-four hours was "*neither timely, nor appropriately coordinated*", and the initial search efforts were "*at best speculative*", with a lack of clearly documented search strategies, and no clear record of what had been done with what resources, when, where, how and why.

> Analysis of the evidence

529. Gaia's family stated that officers still seemed unaware of the seriousness of her epilepsy days into the search. They further alleged that the police failed to act on critical information provided by family members, and failed to carry out diligent and thorough searches of the areas identified.
530. Gaia's epilepsy was mentioned early on in the logs, and both FIC A and the Critical Incident Inspector referenced it in their risk assessments. The Critical Incident Inspector in particular upgraded the risk assessment to high on the grounds that Gaia had missed taking her medication and may have collapsed. Following the Critical Incident Inspector's review, Gaia remained a high risk missing person throughout the investigation.
531. At 1.47pm on 8 November 2017, Constable G recorded on the log that Gaia had missed three doses of her epilepsy medication, and that even when medicated, she would have approximately ten seizures during the day and twelve during the night. Constable G recorded that this information must be passed to all relevant parties, as it dramatically increased the possibility that Gaia may have come to serious harm.
532. PoISA A also referenced Gaia's epilepsy in his policy log entries at 3.05pm and 5.05pm on 8 November 2017, and noted that Gaia may be missing due to illness or injury. Throughout the search, this remained one of several hypotheses under consideration.
533. However, during this investigation, I have not seen any evidence that officers consulted Gaia's family about how her seizures affected her. This is relevant in light of the PoISC's policy log entry at 2.25pm on 10 November 2017 (see below), in which he noted that there were no Grampian statistics for people suffering medical episodes, and that the dementia model did not apply. As such, further information about Gaia's condition might have helped the PoSAs to model her likely behaviour, given she was highly likely to have suffered seizures after going missing⁶³.
534. For example, the following information might have been useful:
- How long did the seizures last, and how would Gaia typically behave during a seizure? For example, would she be incapacitated, or remain conscious but become confused?
 - Were her seizures regularly spaced, or did they occur in 'clusters'?
 - How would she typically behave after a seizure, and how long would this behaviour last?
 - Did her seizures affect her capacity to understand and avoid danger? If so, to what extent?

⁶³ Bearing in mind she was unmedicated, under significant stress, and experienced multiple seizures per day even when taking medication.

- ████████████████████
- Did her seizures affect her physical co-ordination or capabilities? Again, if so, to what extent?
535. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether Dorset Police gave appropriate consideration to the seriousness of Gaia's epilepsy during the search.
 536. The IOPC sought a view from the College of Policing on the overall standard of the search during the first 24 hours after Gaia went missing.
 537. The PNSC Sergeant who undertook the review observed that there was little evidence of co-ordinated police activity early on, and little evidence that local and national guidance was considered initially. He stated that, as a result, the search effort during the first twenty-four hours was "*neither timely, nor appropriately coordinated*", and that initial search efforts were "*at best speculative*", with a lack of clearly documented strategies, and no clear record of what had been done with what resources, when, where, how and why.
 538. In particular, the PNSC Sergeant noted that there was no evidence of informed search activity between 2.40am and 5.44am on 8 November 2017, and that records prior to mid-afternoon on 8 November 2017 were "*very limited*".
 539. He further noted that, while a PolSA (PolSA A) was appropriately consulted at 2.13am on 8 November 2017, there was no further PolSA involvement until he returned to duty at around 3pm, despite requests from both HM Coastguard and a member of Gaia's family.
 540. Finally, the PNSC Sergeant noted that LPSM A was used as an LSO initially, meaning that his experience and expertise in co-ordinating searches was not put to best use.
 541. The IOPC obtained and reviewed documentation held by Dorset Police in relation to the search.
 542. As outlined previously, the first record of an enquiry being made was at 5.20pm, when Constable B updated the log to reflect that he had spoken with Female B, with a negative result.
 543. At 7.03pm, shortly after conducting the initial risk assessment, FIC A set some early actions including circulating a description of Gaia (this had been done previously), searching her home address and the area where she was last seen, and conducting hospital checks. He recorded that officers should liaise with the LPSM as necessary.
 544. It appears that Constable B was the only officer undertaking enquiries on the ground between 5.20pm and 11pm. During that time, he searched Gaia's aunt's address (with the exception of the loft, as there was no ladder), obtained a photograph of Gaia, and visited Female B's address. He also arranged for NPAS to search the coastline, and suggested to the Control Room that officers conduct social media checks and enquiries with taxi firms, and potentially visit pubs in case Gaia had gone inside to seek shelter.

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545. Constables C and D also indicated that Constable B asked them to “*keep a look out*” for Gaia on their way back to Bournemouth, at around 9pm.
546. After Constable B went off-duty at 11pm, there is no evidence of any further action being taken until approximately 1.23am, when Constables E and F were tasked with making enquiries in Swanage. They stated that they attended Gaia’s aunt’s address and Male A’s address, and checked all public toilets in Swanage, and then continued searching around Swanage and the surrounding area, including Peveril Point.
547. Constable A was on duty at Wareham Police Station during this period, and as the Acting Sergeant, would have been responsible for tasking officers with making enquiries.
548. During the course of the IOPC investigation, I formed the view that Constable A may have breached the police Standards of Professional Behaviour in relation to duties and responsibilities. Specifically, the evidence indicated that he may have failed to conduct an adequate handover before finishing his shift, or to inform the night shift in Poole (or any other supervising officer) that Gaia was missing. The evidence also indicated that he may have failed to appropriately task Wareham night shift officers, or to document any actions or decisions in connection with the search.
549. This assessment was based on the following evidence:
- Constable A indicated in his statement that he had allocated specific tasks to several officers, but none of the officers confirmed that Constable A had tasked them, and Constable A did not record on the log that he had tasked officers.
 - Constable A stated that he briefed Constables E and F and asked them to deploy to Swanage “*to help with the search*”, but before they could do so, they were allocated a domestic incident in the Upton area. In fact, Constables E and F did not attend the domestic incident until 12.42am, by which time Constable A had finished his shift. Prior to this, they remained at the station.
 - Constable A stated that, to the best of his recollection, he would have notified the night shift in Poole of the case before finishing his shift. Again there was no record of this, and neither of the sergeants on duty in Poole that night recalled Constable A contacting them. Both indicated that they would expect to be notified of any incidents that were likely to require action from Poole officers during the night.
550. In interview, Constable A explained that although he was an experienced response PC, he had minimal experience as an Acting Sergeant at the time Gaia went missing.
551. He stated that he could not recall receiving any specific training on missing persons, and was not aware of the College of Policing APP on missing persons. However, he confirmed that he had assisted with a number of missing person investigations as a PC.

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552. He accepted that he had not been proactive in tasking officers, which he attributed to inexperience. He added that for part of that evening, between approximately 9.30pm and 10.30pm or 11pm, he was sent to an incident in Winfrith.
553. He stated that Constable E told him he and Constable F had to attend another incident before they could start searching for Gaia, and he accepted this at the time. He was asked whether it was possible that Constables E and F had not prioritised the search for Gaia because he had not allocated them any specific tasks. He replied, "*Possibly*".
554. (It should be noted that Constable A went off duty at 11.30pm, and Constables E and F were not allocated to the domestic incident until 12.42am. It is therefore not clear how Constable E could have known he had been deployed to this incident before Constable A went home.)
555. Constable A accepted that several aspects of his statements to the IOPC were inaccurate, but denied that it had been his intention to mislead.
556. He was asked whether, with hindsight, he believed that he had failed that evening. He replied that he believed he had dealt with the incident to the best of his abilities, but that, with hindsight, he believed he could have handled the incident better. He stated that any failings were due to inexperience and lack of training.
557. The evidence indicates that, after Constable A finished his shift, no further action was taken until the Critical Incident Inspector became aware of the case.
558. The Critical Incident Inspector stated that he alerted the duty Sergeant in Poole after upgrading the risk assessment to high at 1.24am on 8 November 2017. Sergeant C corroborated his account.
559. The College of Policing APP states that a high risk case requires the immediate deployment of police resources, although action may be delayed in exceptional circumstances, such as when searching water or forested areas in darkness. The APP states that an Investigating Officer (IO), a PoISA, and possibly a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) should be appointed.
560. Dorset Police policy also states that PoISAs should be consulted in all high risk cases unless it is immediately apparent that a search is not relevant at that point.
561. The evidence indicates that PoISA A was consulted at approximately 1.40am, soon after the risk assessment was upgraded. While this was in line with force policy and the APP, it is of note that the Critical Incident Inspector initially recorded on the log that an LPSM should be consulted, rather than a PoISA. Moreover, FIC B's entry at 1.33am suggests that PoISA A was only contacted because there was no LPSM on duty.
562. FIC B stated that he asked PoISA A to consider deploying DorSAR when he spoke to him. In his entry at 1.40am, PoISA A recorded that there was

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insufficient information to justify tasking DorSAR and HM Coastguard at that time.

563. The Critical Incident Inspector stated that no resources were available in Poole to assist with the search; however, he tasked two officers in Wareham (Constables E and F) and asked FIC B to deploy Operations assets. He stated that he then briefed FIC B, and they discussed resourcing and instructed officers to carry out further searches of the areas around Gaia's home address, and places where she may be trying to keep warm, in line with PoISA A's advice.
564. Log entries show that the Critical Incident Inspector set a number of actions, including further check of Gaia's aunt's address in case she had returned, further hospital checks, enquiries with taxi firms, and researching social media. These enquiries were completed, with a negative result.
565. At 2.13am, PoISA A recorded that officers should undertake a thorough search of the premises where Gaia was last seen, followed by a search of the surrounding area within 300 metres, including gardens. He suggested that officers also obtain mobile phone data and research Gaia's internet history. Following this, he went off duty.
566. As noted by the College of Policing, there is no evidence of any informed search activity between 2.40am and 5.44am. It is also not clear from the log what physical searches were undertaken between 2.40am and 8.37am (at which point a PCSO was allocated to assist with CCTV enquiries, and officers were tasked with carrying out a 300 metre search from Gaia's aunt's address).
567. Following this, log entries indicate that a number of enquiries were undertaken during daylight hours on 8 November 2017. Significantly, Constable G ascertained from a relative of Male A that Gaia had been behaving irrationally when she attended Female A's address the day before, and had stripped to her underwear at one point.
568. At 10.43am, Constable G updated the Control Room that Gaia may have been suffering from Acute Behavioural Disturbance (ABD) when she went missing. He requested that DorSAR and HM Coastguard be contacted.
569. Subsequent log entries indicate that HM Coastguard was tasked in the early afternoon of 8 November 2017.
570. As highlighted in the College of Policing review, PoISA A only resumed working on the case when he was recalled to duty later in the afternoon of that day. Prior to this, there was no PoISA involvement following PoISA A's input in the early hours of that morning, despite log entries indicating that both HM Coastguard and Gaia's cousin had asked about PoISA involvement.
571. As noted by the College of Policing, LPSM A was informed of the case at approximately 12.30pm, but he and LPSM B were initially utilised as LSOs, and their experience and knowledge as LPSMs was not put to best use.

[REDACTED]

LPSM A was tasked with identifying and mapping search areas at around 3pm, after speaking with PolSA A.

572. At 3.05pm, PolSA A recorded that he would consider DorSAR once a number of outstanding investigative actions had been completed. At 5.56pm, he recorded that DorSAR had been contacted.
573. The DorSAR Company Director later stated that this delay in contacting DorSAR caused “*some initial frustration*”, although they now knew the outcome would have been no different had they been deployed sooner.
574. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether HM Coastguard and DorSAR should reasonably have been tasked sooner.
575. Another relevant development was that Dorset Police were twice made aware during the course of that morning that Gaia did not have a coat, contrary to the description that had previously been circulated of her wearing a black fur-trimmed jacket.
576. At 10.15am, Constable G informed the Control Room that Gaia did not have a coat, and was wearing a black and red top. This information was recorded on the log.
577. At 11.15am, Gaia’s mother called to request an update. During the call, she stated that Gaia had been gone all night, and did not have a coat. The Call Handler did not record on the log that Gaia did not have a coat.
578. This information was relevant, as not only was it a significant risk factor, it also indicated that the description of Gaia had changed.
579. It is not clear from the evidence when an updated description was circulated to officers, but a media release at 7.08pm on 8 November 2017 incorrectly stated that Gaia was believed to be wearing a black fur-trimmed jacket. It was not until 2.54pm on 9 November 2017 that a further media release was issued with an updated description.
580. Log entries also indicate that there was a delay in clarifying the PLS, and it was not until 1.33pm on 8 November 2017 that officers were tasked with conducting a 300 metre search outwards from Female A’s address (prior to that, the 300 metre search had focused on Gaia’s aunt’s address).
581. Moreover, as detailed later in this report, the 300 metre search from Gaia’s aunt’s address had to be repeated on 9 November 2017, as not all areas (such as bins, gardens and alleys) had been checked.
582. Log entries show that, during the first 24 hours of the search, Gaia’s family suggested a number of locations where she might be found. In chronological order, these were:
- Male A’s or Female B’s address
 - [REDACTED]
 - The Durlston area
 - The Zig Zag coastal path

- The lighthouse
- Dancing Ledge
- The [REDACTED] school

583. Subsequent log entries show that all of these locations were checked.
584. The log entry at 1.28pm on 8 November 2017 stated that Gaia's family had mentioned the Zig Zag coastal path, along with several other areas/landmarks that Gaia liked. An entry five minutes later stated that searches of coastal areas were "*in hand*" with HM Coastguard.
585. The MCA Senior Coastal Operations Officer confirmed that the St Albans HM Coastguard team was instructed to search from Dancing Ledge to Anvil Point at 2.40pm on 8 November 2017.
586. He stated that they utilised a hasty search method, with purposeful wandering where appropriate and feasible. He stated that they were searching for someone who was likely to be relatively easy to find, and in need of rescue, and accordingly the POD was around 30%. He was critical of the lack of information and communication they received from the police.
587. The Swanage Coastguard Station Officer provided a similar account. He stated that he repeatedly asked for a police officer to meet them at the designated rendezvous point and provide further information, such as a description of Gaia's clothing, her direction of travel, points of interest or favourite spots, so that they could focus the search in those areas. He stated that the Sergeant at Wareham could not give him any further information other than that Gaia liked to visit Dancing Ledge.
588. Both the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer and the MCA Senior Coastal Operations Officer confirmed that the Station Officer attended Swanage Police station on the evening of 8 November 2017, and briefed officers on the searches that had been carried out.
589. LPSM C stated that he recalled the Station Officer to Swanage Police Station (see his account elsewhere in the report), as he needed to know what areas had been searched and to what level. He stated that the Station Officer and his deputy informed him that they had conducted daylight searches of the areas marked C1-C8 on the map [REDACTED] but had found nothing of note. LPSM C stated that they suggested NPAS search the areas around the cliffs where it was difficult and dangerous to search on foot. He did not say in his account that the Station Officer had said anything about it being a route and track search only, with a low POD, but he recorded in the LPSM log at the time that HM Coastguard had updated him on the search, including the POD. It appears that this information was not passed on to the PoISAs.
590. It is not within the remit of the IOPC to comment on the performance of HM Coastguard. However, the decision maker may wish to note the comments of the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer and the MCA Senior Coastal Operations Officer regarding the level of communication from Dorset Police during the early searches.

591. It will also fall to the decision maker to consider whether Dorset Police should reasonably have done more to ensure that area A12 and the surrounding regions were searched more thoroughly, and whether the search as a whole was conducted to an appropriate standard during the first 24 hours.

> Searches on the ground after the first twenty-four hours⁶⁴

> Contemporaneous evidence

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592. An incident log entry by FIC A at 4.25pm on 8 November 2017 states:

“I am the late turn FIC and therefore the silver commander⁶⁵ for this incident. However since taking over the role from the ET FIC have been unable and remain unable to fully review this high risk missing person investigation due to various competing spontaneous incidents... and also coordinating [sic] detainee transport for 4 detained persons... My airwave ICCS⁶⁶ has also been defective since taking my seat and this is still being resolved now disabling my communications hopefully on a temporary basis.”

593. An entry at 4.52pm states:

“I have been briefed that a 300m search from the end of Morrison road with High Street Swanage has been conducted but not in any great detail. After liaising with [the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant] a more detailed search is now being completed 50m from the end of Morrison road with high street, Swanage. Back gardens and sheds are to be searched during this process. I am told that the following [four] officers are completing this; [REDACTED] have asked [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to assist and to have contact with [REDACTED] for direction to cover the ground prior to light failing completely. I have asked [Constable B] to have contact with the family and he has been fully apprised [sic] by [Constable G] with the full circumstances of today's [sic] events. [Constable B] will give the family updates. If the family decide to search I have asked that [Constable B] collates a list of names, DOB and addresses for the people.”

594. An entry by PolSA A at 5.05pm states:

⁶⁴ This section covers the action taken up until the discovery of Gaia's clothing on 16 November 2017. What follows is a summary of the evidence that is relevant to our specific areas of focus. Where only limited information is provided for a specific date, it should not be assumed that there was no other action taken on that date. Search activity continued throughout the period under investigation.

⁶⁵ A different senior officer was appointed as Silver Commander on the afternoon of 9 November 2017.

⁶⁶ Integrated Communication Control System (i.e. police radio).

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“PoISA review - a number of officers have been carrying out searches around Swanage. These have focused on the area around Morrison Road⁶⁷ and [Gaia’s aunt’s address]. IVCS have been completed at local beauty spots... My working hypothesis is that the misper is voluntarily missing and may become missing ill or injured as result of her epilepsy. The data sets used have not changed as a result of further review. There is no intel to state that she has headed to the cliffs and as such [HM Coastguard] will be standing down when it gets dark. There is inv work ongoing around the phone. Units are checking the public transport links around Swanage. [LPSM C] will coordinate searches on the ground. Has a DC been tasked with the inv side? There is a pond on the High Street, coordinates are 402062 78879. This will need assessing for accessibility. Awaiting update on the Boscombe address, if that proves negative then there are areas for DorSAR to search that are within 1.5km of PLS. I have highlighted Townsend nature reserve, Leeson Wood and Alderbury Copse as likely areas she may have walked to as they are secluded and fit within the criteria for depsondent [sic] females hanging themselves.”

595. An OEL entry at 5.45pm states that Gaia’s coat had been recovered from Female A’s address.

596. A policy log entry by PoISA A at 5.56pm states that LPSM C had contacted DorSAR.

597. An incident log entry at 6.17pm states that Gaia’s mother had suggested further possible lines of enquiry, including a check of the new church on Victoria Avenue.

598. A policy log entry by PoISA A at 6.20pm states that the initial 300-metre search needed to be redone, as it had not been conducted to a sufficient standard.

599. An incident log entry at 6.52pm states:

“FIC: since my last update on this incident log as Silver have remained committed with further incoming 8:313, 8:295 and 8:332⁶⁸ along with reviewing [sic] the NDM review conducted by TFC⁶⁹ ██████████ in relation to the FIC role as far as any sightings are concerned of an armed male message 7:395 refers. There are currently 3 supv in the FCC⁷⁰, one of which is unable to review missing people due to being new in role which leaves the DM and myself. [HM Coastguard is] asking to liaise with me about this incident on the telephone but I am now reviewing the potential as yet unknwon [sic] risk of another missing person on message 8;332.”

600. A further media release was issued at 7.08pm. This release incorrectly stated that Gaia was believed to be wearing a black fur-trimmed jacket (the jacket that had earlier been recovered from Female A’s address).

⁶⁷ The location of the last known CCTV sighting of Gaia.

⁶⁸ These are reference numbers for other incidents.

⁶⁹ Tactical Firearms Commander.

⁷⁰ Force Command Centre.

601. A policy log entry by PoISA A at 7.15pm states that DorSAR had been briefed and tasked with areas to search.
602. An incident log entry at 7.22pm states that a member of the public had called to report very high levels of condensation on the windows of a locked beach hut.
603. An entry at 8.18pm states:
"I have now located the correct beach hut, it is the only one with windows. It is definitely locked from the inside and their [sic] is condensation on this [sic] inside of the hut. I cannot see into the hut as the curtains are pulled. I have knocked loudly and shouted with no response. At this time I do not feel there are grounds to go in through the window unless the FIC gives me authority to force entry."
604. An entry at 8.42pm states:
"Please can the caravan [sic] parks Swanage Bay View Holiday Home and Swanage Coastal Park be contacted and checked. Please inform them that DorSAR will also be conducting search on site."
605. An entry at 8.54pm states that the beach hut had been searched with a negative result.
606. An LPSM log entry at 9.10pm by LPSM C states that HM Coastguard had provided an update on searches undertaken, including the POD. Separately, in an attached search tasking log, the POD is recorded as 90 for area C1, 70 for area C2, 80 for area C3, 40 for area C4, 50 for areas C5 and C6⁷¹, and 20 for areas C7 and C8. An entry next to areas C7 and C8 states, *"Route search by vehicle only"*.
607. A policy log entry by PoISA A at 9.25pm states that DorSAR had been instructed to search the two caravan parks south of Panorama Road.
608. An OEL entry by a Detective Inspector at 9.43pm states:
"I have now read the extensive information detailed on incident log 07:311 and the commencement of 08:381 It is apparent that there is a significant amount of information on the incident log and incredibly difficult to assess what tasks have actually been completed.
My first recommendation is that all potential tasks are collated into a single database, to ensure that nothing is missed and the information is readily available. Ideally individual Niche⁷² tasks should be created for each enquiry, however I appreciate that this will now take a considerable time to do that and an excel spreadsheet of actions may be easier to compile. The paper HOLMES⁷³ system has such an action sheet.
A clearly understandable document outlining precise search details, would be beneficial.

⁷¹ Gaia was found in area C6 (also designated separately as A12).

⁷² Niche is a police records management system used to store information on people, locations, vehicles, organizations (businesses or other groups), incidents and property/evidence.

⁷³ Home Office Large Major Enquiry System.

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It would also be beneficial to create a comprehensive lists as suggested below to include, full names, addresses, phone numbers, last contact, details of when visited, details of address searches [and known associates].

Following the compilation of the above a more comprehensive review will be required.

In the short term the following aspects need to be considered.”

- 609. The entry then outlines twenty-three actions, including a search of Male A's address, enquiries with Gaia's known associates, financial checks, mobile phone data analysis, and monitoring of social media.
- 610. An entry at 11.01pm states that Female A's and Male A's addresses had been searched.

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- 611. A policy log entry by PolSA A at 12.10am on 9 November 2017 states:
“[The Swanage Coastguard Station Officer] has now finished he has stated that they are satisfied that the coast line from Peverell [sic] Point to Dancing Ledge has been checked by them. The only area that cannot be agreed as searched is Dursiton [sic] Bay, there are several areas of Shelf that have not been checked. It may be a consideration for NPAS at low tide or retasking to CG, however, they will require some new intelligence to suggest that this is a possible area for search before deployment. The two CG searching Prioests [sic] way stood down at 2255hrs by [the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer].”
- 612. An incident log entry at 12.12am states:
“████████████████████ spoken to misper's sister, ██████████, she has provided the following areas where she may go to be alone:
 - there is a "dung house" (literally made from dung) in the Ponderosa area of Harman's Cross*
 - there is a WW2 bunker on the way to Worth Matravers by the Square and Compass, by the wooden Henge*
 - there is a farmhouse near to Dancing Ledge*
 - her deceased grandfather's house ██████████”*
- 613. A further entry at 12.15am states:
“[Officer shoulder number redacted] - ██████████ ██████████ ██████████ [Gaia's sister] cannot think of anywhere else or anyone she would be in contact with.”
- 614. Subsequent entries state that the abovementioned locations had been checked, with a negative result.
- 615. A policy log entry by PolSA A at 3.31am includes a map of the area that had been searched thus far ██████████

616. An incident log entry at 8.14am states that a critical incident⁷⁴ had been declared.
617. An entry at 9.49am states that the Police Marine Section would search the coastline from Studland Bay to Chapman's Pool.
618. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 2pm states:
"Data received from DorSAR confirming various areas that were covered 08112017. This confirms the initiall [sic] 300 meters from PLS route and front gardens, were completed by DorSAR along with the caravan sites to the south. Priests way was also completed as were all coastal paths by HMCG. Marine section completed a low tide search from Dancing ledge to Swanage bay."
619. A further entry states that the 300-metre area around Gaia's aunt's address would need to be searched again, as not all areas (such as bins, gardens and alleys) had been checked.
620. A further media release was issued at 2.54pm, clarifying that Gaia had been wearing a red and white checked shirt when she went missing.
621. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 3pm states:
*"Request to duties for 2 PST's [sic] for searches Friday AM. Planned taskings remain:
1. wooded area north of [Gaia's mother's address].
2. Route from PLS to HA included diverted route of A351. This is 60mph road with no footpath and will require traffic support to search.
3. Pond area in 300 meter rad⁷⁵ of PLS.
4. Retask of [Gaia's aunt's address] 300 meter rad.
5. Uncles [sic] address in Boscombe to locate mispers [sic] phone."*
622. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 6pm states:
"Review and collation of previously searched areas ongoing. My intention is to clear the ground in the town that has not yet been covered and then balloon out to encompass [sic] the 1500 meter radius (50% grampian⁷⁶ suicidal statistics)."
623. An OEL entry by a Detective Chief Superintendent at 7.47pm states:
*"I have been briefed on this high risk misper by [the Detective Superintendent] and [Silver Commander]. I am aware that there has been significant ongoing enquiries and these enquiries continue.
[REDACTED] is the duty Gold but is committed with other incidents at this time as duty Gold and SFC⁷⁷. I have discussed this missing person with him and agreed that I will take oversight as Gold. Based on the information I have been provided with this missing investigation will now be led by an accredited*

⁷⁴ A critical incident is defined as any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.

⁷⁵ Radius.

⁷⁶ As outlined previously, the Grampian Research [REDACTED] found that 50% of suicidal females aged 18-30 who were on foot were located within 1500m of the place last seen.

⁷⁷ Strategic Firearms Commander.

[REDACTED]

PIP2⁷⁸ Senior Detective [REDACTED] The investigation will keep an open mind, but there are a considerable number of enquiries outstanding and I believe it proportionate to bring the investigation into the Crime and Criminal Justice Command in order to maximise opportunities to ensure any potential criminal investigation is considered along the lines of traditional missing person enquiries. The circumstances are [sic] around GAIA are not clear at this time. The priority is to locate her...

Working strategy

- 1) To locate & ensure safe return of Gaia Pope thus min risk to Gaia Pope
- 2) To maintain confidence of Gaia's family and thus min risk to Gaia's family
- 3) To MS⁷⁹ of any police officers and first responders tasked
- 3) To develop information & intelligence in order to locate Gaia
- 4) Conduct an investigation in order to understand if any criminal offences have taken place (Secure and Preserve Evidence)
- 5) To maintain public confidence."

10 November 2017

624. A policy log entry by the PolSC at 7.45am on 10 November 2017 states:

"I have assessed the areas searched by both Police and volunteer assets since Tuesday and the level of search that has been conducted. The searches currently completed at a level so far comprise of:

LKP [Gaia's aunt's address]:

- Police IVC's in the 300M radius
- No DorSAR search
- NPAS thermal imagery

HA [Gaia's mother's address]:

- TP home address search
- PST⁸⁰ 300meter search (excluding wooded area A2)

PLS Morrison Road:

- Police IVC's to 300meters
- DorSAR route including front gardens and open areas to 300meters
- NPAS thermal imagery

Caravan parks south:

- DorSAR area searches
- NPAS thermal

Open areas to south of Swanage to the coast:

- HMCG route and track
- NPAS thermal and daylight [sic] searches

Cliffs and coastline:

- HMCG route and track
- NPAS thermal and daylight searches
- Marine section low tide searches

Main routes A351:

⁷⁸ Professionalising Investigations Programme. PIP2 investigators are qualified to conduct serious and complex investigations.

⁷⁹ Maintain safety.

⁸⁰ Police Search Teams.

- NPAS thermal searches
- Police IVC's

Priority area tasks:

██████████ road.

- PST search 300M radius

HA [Gaia's mother's address]:

- PST home address search
- PST complete wooded area A2 or specialist area dog.

PLS Morrison Road:

- PST search to 300 meters

Caravan parks south of PLS:

- Nothing at this time

Open areas to south of Swanage to the coast:

- Wider area search with NPAS.

Cliffs and coastline:

- Wider area search with NPAS
- Marine section low tide searches
- Coastguard searches of caves and cliff areas where safe.

Main routes A351:

- PST searches of routes with traffic support."

625. A policy log entry by the PolSC at 2.25pm states:

"Once the initial 300 meter searches and the address searches have been completed by PST then we must consider the ongoing search areas. While statistically 50% of females were found within 1500 meters of PLS/LKN these areas should be targeted for maximum effect and in line with the search strategy.

Grampian does not provide statistics for a similar medical episode and the dementia model does not apply.

In considering that the MisPer may have taken a substance or had a medical episode then we should take into account [sic] the capability of the MisPer at the time of the missing event. The Misper is described as agited [sic] and sweating profusely. Her behaviour was erratic [sic] and consistent with heightened [sic] adrenalin [sic] levels.

The MisPer has been captured on CCTV running toward [Female A's address]. In this case it could reasonably be assumed that the MisPer was capable of running and in a heightened state that she was capable of covering some distance assuming that she did not have an epileptic episode or other injury. Using the 50% stats for suicidal females this would produce two 1500 meter radius search areas centered [sic] on the PLS and HA." ██████████

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626. At 3.05pm, the Gold Commander was provided with a map showing the two 1500 metre search areas.

627. At 3.34pm, he sent the following email to the Silver Commander and the Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) Chief Inspector:

"As we spoke I am content that the approach should be a phased search extended to areas of key priority within the extended search zone and areas

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which we can search at relative speed with a dog(s), air support, drone etc. to be maximised over the weekend period.

Can we get some medical guidance (if not already) as to the likelihood of survival outdoors based on the information we have and no medicine for her epilepsy etc.?"

628. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 3.30pm states:

"Advised by [NPT Chief Inspector] that Gold has agreed that the two 1500 meter areas should be searched. [PoISA B] and I agree that this should be a proportionate [sic] search and should be focused on the two scenarios: Suicide/missing ill or injured.

Search strategy for following days:

- 1. PST search of [Gaia's aunt's address]*
- 2. PST search of Home address*
- 3. PST search of [Female A's address]*
- 4. Complete 300 meter PST search of [Gaia's aunt's street]*
- 5. DorSAR / PST searches of wooded areas around HA (outside of 300meter rad)*
- 6. Searches of railway overbridges and areas affording any significant jump.*
- 7. Confirmation of search requirements at [Gaia's uncle's address].*

[The Silver Commander] and [NPT Chief Inspector] advised and agreed."

629. At 6.35pm, Dorset Police issued a further media appeal along with the CCTV footage of Gaia on Morrison Road.

630. The Missing Persons Bureau (MPB) was informed of the report at 8.38pm⁸¹.

11 November 2017

631. A policy log entry by PoISA B at 7.30pm on 11 November 2017 states:

"Area A12 - TASK 74 externe [sic] low level of POD⁸² consideration for re task. There are water searches to be considered task areas 76/74/73/61/60 Consideration for quarries at Task 69."

632. A Detective Constable produced a summary of Gaia's medical records. This summary stated that Gaia took a variety of medications for her epilepsy, which she did not have with her, and that her GP had warned of "severe consequences" if she did not take her medication. The summary also stated that Gaia's epilepsy was worse when she was under stress.

12 November 2017

633. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 9am on 12 November 2017 states:

"I have spoken to [the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer] and it is evident that they have searched coatal [sic] tracks but that these searches are limited

⁸¹ The APP states that police forces must submit case details to the MPB in all cases where the person is still missing after 72 hours. In this case, the MPB was informed slightly outside of the 72 hour time limit, but not significantly so.

⁸² Probability of Detection.

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to the tracks and bordering banks to a width of approx 5-10 meters. These areas have had considerable NPAS coverage but will require detailed search in due course.”

634. A further entry states:

“Gold meeting updated by [the PoISC]. Suicide scenario updated Gold – 1500 meters from PLS and LKP will be complete apart from water sources that require dive searches. This does still leave a large area to the coast beyond 1500meters. This has been covered by NPAS, Marine section and coastguard route and path in the days following the missing event but still has areas of scrub and quarry that cannot be cleared from the air. Also would have covered a medical episode or accident RTC⁸³ again these would be covered by the searches as above. No other tasking from meeting.”

13 November 2017

████ 635. An unsigned and untimed policy log entry on 13 November 2017 states (in part):

“I think it remains highly likely that the MisPer has suffered a medical or mental health episode at the time of her disappearance [sic]. The described actions at [Female A’s address] are not consistant [sic] with symptoms of her diagnosed epilepsy and may be as the result of another condition or a consumed substance. Imidiata [sic] areas around the LKP, PLS have been completed and searches into the surrounding conurbation continue. The area between the cliff and the town is quite extensive and currently has been covered by NPAS, some DorSAR areas and a number of coastal route searches have been completed by Coastguard to a width of approx. 5-10 meters. This is a huge area and will take a significant amount of time to search in detail.... MCIT⁸⁴ are considering a number of possible scenarios with regard to third party involvement in the area of [Female A’s address].”

████ 636. Gaia’s sister was █████ interviewed at 1.28pm. She was unable to suggest anywhere else Gaia might be. She stated that Gaia “*could have been planning to go anywhere*”, and was not in a rational state.

████ 637. FIC C produced a CCTV strategy outlining three phases of CCTV trawls. Phase one of the strategy entailed surveying certain areas for CCTV cameras. Phase two entailed surveying “*pinch points*” for vehicles entering and leaving Swanage, and phase three was a continuation of phase one, focusing on roads radiating outwards from Gaia’s last known location.

638. On the map included with this strategy █████ part of Priests Road was highlighted in blue, indicating that it was to be covered as part of phase one. However, an additional portion of Priests Road, not labelled on the map, was highlighted in yellow, indicating that it was to be covered as part of phase three. The CCTV footage of Gaia that was found on 19 November 2017 was recovered from a camera on the section of Priests Road that had been highlighted in yellow.

⁸³ Road Traffic Collision.

⁸⁴ Major Crime Investigation Team.

14 November 2017

639. A policy log entry at 7am on 14 November 2017 states (in part):
- “Given the MisPer’s history of mental health, and the recently raised concerns following the receipt [sic] of images that may have brought back memories of her historic rape and exposure to CSE⁸⁵. It remains quite probable that the MisPer has left the PLS with the intent of harming herself. Taking into account the Grampian statistics that 50% of females are located within 1500 meters of the PLS/LKP 300 meter searches are almost complete around the LKP and the intention is to close urban areas outside 300meters between the PLS/LKP and the possible route [sic] back toward Langton. There remain [sic] number of bodies of water that will require specialist dive assets to search.*
- NPAS have provided daytime overflight but the level of confidence of this search should be taken into consideration as it is not as effective as ground searching due to limitations imposed by pockets of dense vegetation.”*
640. A further entry indicates that advice was being sought from a PoISA from the National Crime Agency (NCA).

15 November 2017

641. A policy log entry at 8.30am on 15 November 2017 states that a member of the public had reported hearing a woman crying and screaming north of her address between 1am and 2am on 8 November 2017⁸⁶. The entry states:
- “This [address] is outside of the 300m area initially searched from the HA. To the north of [the informant’s] property is a dense wooded area which may be significant. This is approximately 400 metres away. Discussion with [PoISA A] and policy decision that a 400m search area would be conducted by the two teams today. Areas to be sectorised [sic] by [PoISA A] and will be tasked accordingly. We cannot discount that the misper still under the possible influence of some drug or simply due to her deteriorating [sic] health may have wandered further afield [sic] to the home address or that a third party was involved in this relocation of her.”*

> Account provided by the Gold Commander

642. The Gold Commander provided a statement to the IOPC on 17 April 2019.
643. He stated that he took on the role of Gold Commander on the evening of 9 November 2017, and throughout the following day, he briefed the Assistant Chief Constable and had a number of conversations with the Silver Commander about the progress of the investigation, the search plan, and the possibility of third party involvement.
644. He stated that he attended Wareham Police Station on the morning of 12 November 2017, and the PoISC briefed him on the searches that were taking

⁸⁵ Child Sexual Exploitation.

⁸⁶ This location was not near the place where Gaia was found, and there is no evidence to suggest that the reports of screaming were related to Gaia.

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place. He stated that they discussed the level of confidence in the searches, including the searches being undertaken by NPAS. He stated that the PoISC informed him that the NPAS footage showed details such as black bags in the churchyard. He stated that he looked at some of the NPAS images, and could see that they were detailed.

645. He stated that the Silver Commander emailed him a copy of Gaia's medical history at 10.59am on 13 November 2017, and he noted that she did not have her epilepsy medication with her.

> **Account provided by the Silver Commander**

646. The Silver Commander provided a statement to the IOPC on 26 June 2019.
647. She stated that she was appointed as Silver Commander for the investigation on the afternoon of 9 November 2017, following which she arranged an initial briefing via phone with the Detective Inspector in CID, the Neighbourhood Inspector at Poole Police Station, and other personnel who had been conducting the investigation up to that point.
648. She stated that a further briefing took place at approximately 10.50am on 10 November 2017, which was intended to ensure that sufficient resources were in place to conduct "*a fast moving multifaceted enquiry, which involved a significant commitment by Dorset Police to locate and investigate the disappearance*".
649. She stated that she was briefed on the search via conference call at approximately 11am on 11 November 2017.
650. She stated that the Detective Inspector in CID called her that evening regarding the potential need to conduct further enquiries that might lead to arrests.
651. She stated that she was present on 12 November 2017 when the investigating team briefed the Gold Commander and MCIT staff, following which it was agreed that MCIT would continue the investigation.

> **Account provided by the CID Detective Inspector**

652. This officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 4 April 2019. She stated that they discussed Gaia's case at the morning tasking meeting on 9 November 2017, and the Chair asked her to send a Detective Constable to Wareham to assist with the ongoing enquiries.
653. She stated that at 9.30am, they attended a briefing chaired by the Neighbourhood Inspector at Poole Police Station, who was the Silver Commander at that time. She stated that she then tasked an officer to review the incident logs and OEL, and log all the actions taken thus far on a single spreadsheet. She stated that she also asked two DCs to attend Wareham.
654. She stated that she attended a further meeting at 10.40am to discuss progress, and at 7.40pm, she asked a DS to attend Wareham the following

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day and continue reviewing the incident logs and OEL in order to keep the spreadsheet up to date.

655. She stated that they continued to hold regular briefings and progress update meetings, and she continued to co-ordinate resources and general enquiries until 12 November 2017, when MCIT was asked to take over the enquiry.

> **Account provided by the Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) Chief Inspector**

656. The Chief Inspector in charge of patrol and neighbourhood policing teams in Poole and Purbeck provided a statement to the IOPC on 22 March 2019.
657. He stated that it was decided on 9 November 2017 that CID would take ownership of the missing person investigation, and that he would provide assistance as needed by acting as liaison with Territorial Policing Command.
658. He stated that the following day, he agreed to support the Silver Commander by ensuring resources were freed up across the force. He stated that he contacted Chief Inspectors and Detective Chief Inspectors in other teams and asked them to free up resources for use in searches and house-to-house enquiries, and ensured that the officers responsible for progressing these lines of enquiry had enough resources to be able to operate effectively.

> **Account provided by the Neighbourhood Inspector at Poole Police Station**

659. This officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 2 April 2019.
660. He stated that the NPT Chief Inspector called him shortly before 8.40am on 9 November 2017, and asked him to oversee and progress the enquiry.
661. He stated that at 10am, he met with officers who were working on the case, including the Sergeant responsible for co-ordinating house to house enquiries, the Detective Inspector in CID, and the PoISC.
662. He stated that a number of initial actions were identified, including further house to house enquiries, obtaining Gaia's medical history, enquiries with local taxi firms and hospitals, and identifying priority search areas.
663. He stated that he and the PoISC identified the priority search areas as the area within 300 metres of Morrison Avenue at the junction with Manor Avenue, with a 50 metre more intensive search of the immediate area, and the area within 300 metres of Gaia's home address in Langton Matravers. He stated that he arranged for the Enhanced Policing Team (EPT) to conduct these searches, and arranged for an FLO to be appointed.
664. He stated that at 1.45pm, he authorised the Digital Media Investigator to view Gaia's Facebook profile.
665. He stated that he spoke with the NPT Chief Inspector shortly before 3.20pm, and expressed the view that it would be better for CID to take on ownership of

[REDACTED]

the case, which was by then becoming increasingly focused on various crime hypotheses, intelligence and phone work.

666. He stated that at 3.20pm, he had a phone conference with the Detective Inspector in CID, the NPT Chief Inspector and the Silver Commander to discuss departmental ownership of the enquiry.
667. He stated that he updated the NPT Chief Inspector again at 4.40pm, and the NPT Chief Inspector confirmed that he would speak to the Detective Superintendent about ownership of the case.
668. He stated that at 5pm, the House to House Coordinator informed him that they had found CCTV footage of Gaia on Morrison Avenue⁸⁷ at 3.39pm. He stated that he gave instructions for house-to-house enquiries to be undertaken in that area, and allocated staff to assist.
669. He stated that he met with the CID Detective Inspector and Detective Constable at 5.50pm, and they reviewed the evidence and information that had been obtained thus far and allocated further actions.
670. He stated that at 8pm, the NPT Chief Inspector informed him that another officer (the Silver Commander) was now leading on the enquiry.

> **Account provided by Police Search Advisor (PoISA) A**

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671. In his statement dated 23 February 2019, PoISA A stated that he contacted DorSAR, and identified areas to be searched including Leeson Woods, Litchfield Copse, Alderbury Copse and Townsend Nature Reserve.
 672. He stated that the three hundred metre search from the PLS was completed by 9.20pm on 8 November 2017, and he then instructed DorSAR to search two caravan parks south of Panorama Road.
 673. He stated that it was dark by this time, and DorSAR informed him that they were unable to search Leeson Woods, so he tasked a general-purpose police dog unit to search that area. He stated that he also instructed officers to walk along Valley Road, which was a main road in the area where Gaia lived.
 674. He stated that at 12.10am on 9 November 2017, he was told that HM Coastguard had searched the coastline and cliffs from Peveril Point to Dancing Ledge (which would have included the area where Gaia was eventually found). He stated that by the time he finished his shift at 3.30am, he was satisfied that a properly formulated search operation was underway and that tasks were being carried out.
 675. He stated that he resumed work on 11 November 2017, and arranged for railway lines and bridges to be searched.
 676. He stated that on 15 November 2017, he deployed two teams to search within four hundred metres of the [REDACTED] after a member of the public reported hearing a woman crying in that area on 8 November 2017.

⁸⁷ The CCTV was on Morrison Road, but the Poole Neighbourhood Inspector gave the street name as Morrison Avenue in his statement.

[REDACTED]

> **Account provided by Lost Person Search Manager (LPSM) C**

677. LPSM C provided an account to the IOPC on 29 January 2019. He stated that he arrived at Swanage Police station at some point before 6pm on 8 November 2017, and LPSMs A and B briefed him on the circumstances. He stated that they told him they had been trying to ascertain what searches had been completed, and some had been recorded in the log, but others were still outstanding.
678. He described the search up until that point as “*sporadic*”. He stated that it was hard to tell which IVCs had been completed and which were still outstanding, and no OIC had been appointed. He stated that he was keen to commence a more thorough systematic search, utilising trained resources.
679. He stated that the information currently available led him to form the view that Gaia had gone missing either because she was suicidal, or because she was suffering from a mental disorder such as ABD.
680. He stated that he decided to set an initial search area of one and a half kilometres. He stated that HM Coastguard and NPAS had already covered the cliff area, although he was unsure to what extent at that stage.
681. He stated that, if Gaia had jumped from a cliff, there would be little chance of finding her in darkness, and this could be revisited in daylight. He stated that someone jumping in front of a train would be reported to police, and the information available at that time suggested that Gaia had no access to a vehicle. He stated that if Gaia had been seeking to harm herself, the most likely method would be hanging.
682. He stated that, in relation to the mental health hypothesis, Gaia could have walked off with no destination in mind, and taken shelter in woods or a ditch, or in a place already known to her.
683. He stated that he considered this information when formulating a search strategy. He stated that there was a lack of trained search assets, and accordingly he contacted DorSAR and requested that an OIC be appointed to co-ordinate the investigation, allowing him to concentrate on the search.
684. He stated that he was aware that HM Coastguard had been conducting searches around Swanage; however, they had no record of what areas had been searched and to what level, and they needed this information. He stated that HM Coastguard had stood down for the evening, so he asked the Control Room to contact them and ask a member of the team to attend the police station.
685. He stated that he was very concerned for Gaia by this point, as she had been missing for twenty-four hours and it was dark and cold and due to get colder. He stated that he formed the view that the search should be PoISA-led with LPSM support, and accordingly contacted PoISA A and asked him to attend the police station.
686. He stated that he tasked officers to check locations known to Gaia, and mapped the initial search area [REDACTED]

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687. He stated that the DorSAR Company Director and PoISA A arrived at approximately 7.15pm, and they agreed a search strategy based on where Gaia may have gone if she intended to take her life by hanging, or if she was having a mental health crisis. He stated that the initial areas identified were wooded areas close to her home address, routes between the PLS and her home address, and areas in her direction of travel; these areas were then allocated to officers.
688. He stated that he marked the areas H1-H5 on the map ██████████ ██████████ and instructed officers to conduct house-to-house enquiries in those areas and look for CCTV.
689. He stated that the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer and his deputy arrived at the station, and informed him that they had conducted daylight searches of the areas marked C1-C8 on the map ██████████. He stated that they told him they had found nothing of note, and suggested that NPAS search areas around the cliffs where it was difficult and dangerous to search on foot.
690. He stated that he requested a police general purpose dog on a number of occasions, but no dog was available until just before midnight. He stated that he then briefed the handler, and instructed him to search wooded areas close to Gaia's home address marked A2, A3, A4 and A7 on the map ██████████ ██████████.
691. He stated that all the initial taskings were completed by approximately 2am, and PoISA A decided that searches would continue through the night as directed by the on-call PoISA, following consultation with the Duty Inspector.

> **Account provided by the Police Search Co-ordinator (PoISC)**

- ██████ 692. The officer who acted as PoISC during the missing person investigation is a full time PoISA and PoISC, and police search trainer. In his statement to the IOPC dated 6 March 2019, he stated that he first became aware of the search in the late morning of 8 November 2017, and became heavily involved in the search from 9 November 2017 onwards.
693. He stated that the search was conducted methodically, informed by the Grampian statistics and a number of working hypotheses. He stated that as the search progressed, in the absence of any new information or intelligence to provide fresh areas of focus, their search area began to expand to include the most likely areas Gaia might be. He stated that at one point, they had a hundred and fifty searchers and house-to-house officers operating within Swanage and the surrounding area. He stated that officers searched tirelessly, often in dangerous conditions, and worked extremely long shifts in an effort to find Gaia.
694. He stated that during his initial review of the search, he was given a map that reportedly showed the area searched by HM Coastguard on 8 November 2017. He stated that this map showed an area of coastline marked in blue from Anvil Point to Dancing Ledge, which included the area where Gaia was eventually found and passed relatively close to where her clothing was found.

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695. He stated that he was not provided with any further information about the search by HM Coastguard, and when he was finally able to speak to the team leader a few days later, it became apparent that a small team had searched routes and tracks in the area with a minimal “*sweep width*”⁸⁸.
696. He stated that on reviewing this information, he formed the view that the searches by HM Coastguard and NPAS would have located a subject who was mobile, or who had collapsed in open ground close to the main tracks. He stated that, taking into account the subsequent NPAS coverage of that area and the Marine Unit searches at the base of the cliffs, and in the absence of any additional information or intelligence to suggest that Gaia was in that area, he concluded that further searches of the area would not be appropriate at that time.
697. In relation to the CCTV footage that was discovered on 19 November 2017, which showed Gaia heading west on Priests Road at 3.59pm on 7 November 2017, the PoISC was asked to comment on whether this evidence might have helped them to find Gaia sooner.
698. He noted that the caravan park at the end of Priests Road was searched by DorSAR on 8 November 2017.
699. He stated that, if they had received the footage at an earlier stage, it might have given them a better indication of travel to the south; however, Gaia’s direction of travel could also have led west to her home address in Langton Matravers, or to anywhere along the south coast.
700. He stated that the footage might have led them to prioritise southerly areas over those to the north of Gaia’s home address or the town, but without any further information or intelligence, they would still have had to search outwards from the location of the CCTV camera, which would have taken considerable time. He stated that Gaia was found 1780 metres⁸⁹ south-south-west from this last sighting, which lay outside both the initial three hundred metre search radius, and the fifteen hundred metre radius within which 50% of missing people are found.
701. The PoISC was asked about PoISA B’s policy log entry of 11 November 2017, regarding possible further searches of area A12. He stated that HM Coastguard independently planned and undertook searches of this area, and presented PoISA A with a map showing the areas searched. He stated that they took this information at face value, and assumed that the areas had been fully searched.
702. He stated that around four or five days into the search, he sought further details from HM Coastguard regarding the level of the searches, and was informed that they had not conducted a full area search, but rather a route and track search with minimal overlap in poor weather and light conditions. He stated that the search team would have passed close by Gaia’s clothing, but it was “*not easy to spot*” and was on the other side of a stone wall.
703. He stated that they gave some thought to deploying further search teams to this area, but eventually concluded that the route and track searches

⁸⁸ The distance searched on either side of the route or track

⁸⁹ As outlined previously, IOPC investigators measured this distance as approximately 1.47 miles (2365 metres).

combined with the NPAS search were sufficient, based on the information and intelligence available at that time.

704. He stated that the decision was made to continue expanding the search outwards from the town, looking at the most probable areas and routes Gaia may have taken, based on the hypothesis that she had gone missing voluntarily and then fallen ill or been injured.

> **Account provided by a National Crime Agency (NCA) National Search Advisor**

705. A licensed PoISA and National Search Advisor based in the National Crime Agency (NCA) Major Crime Investigative Support (MCIS) team provided a statement to the IOPC on 1 October 2019.
706. He explained that the role of MCIS was to provide a range of specialist support to all UK police forces, government and other law enforcement agencies both in the UK and abroad, in relation to serious and complex crime and missing person investigations.
707. He stated that, while it is seen as good practice in complex cases, there is no statutory obligation on police forces to seek specialist advice from the MCIS team, nor is there a requirement to accept or act upon the advice provided.
708. He stated that the PoISC called him on the morning of 14 November 2017, and provided him with a broad overview of the search. He stated that they discussed the importance of ensuring that the operation was in line with the working hypotheses outlined by the SIO, and the need to regularly review areas that had already been searched, and the potential need to re-search areas that provided an insufficient degree of assurance, and finally the need for continuity in the management of the search.
709. He stated that they agreed the PoISC or the SIO would contact him again if they wished to discuss the case in more depth.

> **Account provided by the House to House Coordinator**

710. The House to House Coordinator provided a statement to the IOPC on 25 April 2019. He stated that he was in charge of a team of officers tasked with conducting house-to-house enquiries at all properties within a 100-yard radius of the address where Gaia was last seen. He stated that they also conducted vehicle stop checks in the High Street, with a view to identifying witnesses and/or Dashcam footage.
711. He stated that his instructions were to move gradually outwards from the PLS, along the main arterial routes that Gaia was most likely to have taken as she left the area.
712. He stated that he worked fourteen-hour shifts during the investigation, and often had to contact officers in the late evening and instruct them to return to

[REDACTED]

the station, as they were keen to continue working after their shifts had ended.

713. He stated that his team continued conducting house-to-house enquiries after Gaia was found, in the hope of identifying any outstanding witnesses or CCTV footage.

714. He stated that the officer who saw the CCTV camera on Priests Road informed him immediately, and they asked the owner to check the footage and contact police if it contained anything of relevance. He stated that the owner subsequently notified police that Gaia appeared on the footage. He stated:

“Having consulted the map I can see that the reason this CCTV footage on Priest’s Road was not identified by the house to house enquiries previously is due to it falling outside of our enquiry area. In my view this part of Priest’s Road would not have been a logical path for a local such as Gaia to take if she were intending to head towards the coast. I thought that she would have instead have continued down Priest’s Way towards the path in that direction.”

> **Account provided by the Detective Sergeant in charge of CCTV enquiries**

■ 715. This officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 8 May 2019. He stated that his team identified thirty-seven CCTV camera locations during the investigation.

716. He stated that the CCTV footage from Priests Road was not obtained until 19 November 2017, due to a misunderstanding. He explained that he used the map to identify areas for CCTV trawls on 14 November 2017, and had been unaware at that time that Priests Road continued on the other side of Priests Way, as that part of Priests Road was unnamed on the map [REDACTED]. He stated that because of this, he did not realise that a portion of Priests Road had not been visited when he instructed an officer to canvass that area.

717. He stated that, unlike house-to-house enquiries, where every address visited is recorded, officers conducting CCTV trawls would make notes of the areas checked and verbally update him once those checks were finished. He stated that officers would only complete forms when CCTV had been recovered.

718. He commented that “*arguably*” CCTV trawls should be documented in the same way as house-to-house enquiries; however, he was conscious that CCTV trawls covered a much wider geographical area.

> **Account provided by the Company Director of DorSAR**

■ 719. The DorSAR Company Director provided a statement to the IOPC on 15 March 2019. He stated that DorSAR deployed resources on 8, 11, 12, 16 and 18 November 2017.

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720. He stated that DorSAR held a debrief on 3 January 2017, in which they concluded that the discovery of Gaia was “*fortunate*”, as the location was concealed and difficult to access. He expressed the view that, if Gaia had not been found on 18 November 2017, it was unlikely that she would have been found by chance in future (for example, by a member of the public).

721. He stated:

“One point which did lead to some initial frustration was that DorSAR were not called until nearly 24 hours after Gaia had been reported missing. Once we were contacted on the 8th November 2017, the day after Gaia went missing, we were able to deploy quickly and commence our search effort. This I would suggest resulted in our initial search activity being delayed 20+ hours, however we now know this would not have resulted in any different strategy or outcome over the initial 1-6 days.

The other key learning point... is the need for 'search sector debriefs' to be clear and compressive on detailing the precise methodology and area searched. By way of an example teams reporting a path searched could range from 'just the path', 'the path and hedges', 'the path and both sides of hedges' through to 'the path, hedges and a x meter offset' (area searched either side of the path). Simply marking the path as searched on a map may be interpreted incorrectly at a later date. The two incidents that this is notable on in the 5 search occurrences for Gaia are the initial search of the priest's way by Coast Guard and the search of the area the Misper was located in prior to the search where Gaia was found, both concluded in a 'completed area' but on post search analysis, not as wide or as thorough as may have been interpreted. I am aware that Dorset Police are fully aware of this point.”

> Case review by the College of Policing

████ 722. In relation to the searches undertaken after the first 24 hours, the IOPC asked the PNSC Sergeant to comment on:

- Whether the police response and management of the search was in accordance with local and national guidance.
- Whether any lines of enquiry or resources were not considered.
- Whether the progress of the search was adequately recorded, specifically the scope, resourcing and outcomes.

723. The PNSC Sergeant stated that, after the first twenty-four hours, the lines of enquiry and use of resources were “*mostly appropriate*”. He further stated:

“Following on from the initial lack of search coordination, once an appropriate search regime was established under the coordination of Dorset's cadre of Police Search Advisers both systematic and appropriate procedures were followed. Searching was no longer speculative, but intelligence driven & crucially recorded. There is clear evidence that both Search & Investigation strands were both feeding & informing strategies. These were then regularly reviewed, both jointly & singularly from this point (as neither should function in isolation). This is identified good national practice.”

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724. The PNSC Sergeant noted the following:

- There is evidence that both the search and investigation had structure, and regular joint meetings helped to ensure that relevant information was shared. This is good national practice.
- There is evidence of regular dialogue between the PoSAs and LPSMs.
- A search cell was formed and utilised, which is good national practice, although there is little information in relation to staffing levels and composition.
- Up until 11 November 2017, the briefing process was not clearly defined, which can result in a lack of clarity in relation to search objectives and parameters. However, from this date onwards, comprehensive search safety and briefing documents were produced, delivered and signed.
- The Grampian Statistics are referenced throughout the search strategy. The iFIND datasets are also mentioned, but only briefly. However, iFIND would not have provided any more suitable behavioural data on this occasion.
- There is evidence that appropriate data was utilised within the search strategies employed.
- An NCA National Search Adviser was consulted and deployed. This is good national practice.
- The mapping and search tasking sheets were of an appropriate standard.
- The premises searches were of an appropriate standard.
- There is evidence that debriefs were conducted.
- All routes within the area of the PLS/LKP and Gaia's home address were searched.
- There is no evidence of any "Memorandums of Understanding" (MOUs) between Dorset Police and any other search partners, specifically DorSAR and HM Coastguard.

> **Analysis of the evidence**

725. Gaia's family alleged that the police failed to organise the searches so that they were effective, and failed to utilise resources properly. They expressed their distress and concern over how long it took to find Gaia.
726. An argument could be made that certain aspects of the search could have been improved upon.
727. For example, as outlined previously, DorSAR was not contacted until 5.56pm on 8 November 2017, and it was not until 2.54pm on 9 November 2017 that a media release was issued clarifying that Gaia had not been wearing a coat.

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737. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether this decision was reasonable. The decision maker may wish to take into account the following:
- Resources were finite, and a range of locations were searched between 8 and 16 November 2017.
 - The evidence indicates that search taskings during this period were informed by the available information and intelligence, and by the Grampian research.
 - As the PolSC noted on 10 November 2017, the Grampian research did not include data for people who had suffered a medical episode, and the dementia model did not apply.
 - While Gaia’s family mentioned a number of locations along the coast that Gaia “liked”, these were widely distributed and there was no specific intelligence at that time to suggest that Gaia had gone to the Zig Zag coastal path (rather than any of the other locations suggested).
738. Aside from the potential issues outlined above, overall the evidence shows that a number of lines of enquiry were explored between 8 and 16 November 2017, including those recommended in the College of Policing APP and the Grampian research.
739. The evidence indicates that, from the afternoon of 8 November 2017, the searches were informed by the working hypothesis that Gaia had gone missing voluntarily, and had then been injured or fallen ill as a result of mental health issues or epilepsy. This hypothesis remained under consideration throughout the search, even after arrests were made (see below).
740. The PNSC Sergeant who reviewed the case expressed the view that, after the first twenty-four hours, the lines of enquiry and use of resources were “*mostly appropriate*”, and that searches were systematic and intelligence-driven.
741. As to whether the outcome might have been different if different decisions had been made during this period: the earlier discovery of the CCTV footage on Priests Road and/or of Gaia’s clothing may have resulted in her being found sooner. However, this investigation has not identified any evidence to support a finding that Gaia was still alive 24 hours after she went missing.
742. It will fall to the decision maker to consider, based on the above evidence, whether the search was appropriately managed and resourced after the first 24 hours.

> Liaison between the police and civilian volunteers

> Contemporaneous evidence

743. A policy log entry by PoISA A at 3.19pm on 8 November 2017 states:
“Information received re family and 30 members of the public in Swanage attending to assist with Search. I have discussed this with D2, re risks around MOP searching, [Dorset Police] liability and staffing required to accompany the volunteers. D2 does not have the staff available to accompany the MOP. Decision made not to task them but advise around IVCs in urban area where the risks are lowered. I informed D2 that I would not deal direct with the family as this would detract from the search management and requested a local unit act as liaison. This was agreed by D2.”
744. An incident log entry by PoISA A at 5.05pm on 8 November 2017 states (in part):
“There are family members currently out searching. I have spoken to the D2 and local SPVN⁹⁰ re the family members. There are concerns around tasking them to areas where they may make a discovery and potentially destroy [sic] any evidence, furthermore any groups that we task will need officers accompanying them. I have asked local SPVN to allocate an officer to liaise direct with the family and suggested that they could potentially be making enquiries at local shops etc and do some H2H⁹¹. This will need coordinating. For operational reasons I will not be speaking direct to the family. D2 aware.”
745. An entry at 6.50pm on 8 November 2017 states:
“Call from Gaia's cousin. She would like to be called ASAP by an officer with an area that her and a group of volunteers should be searching for the [sic] Gaia. She states she was told she was going to be called by the on call PoISA 4 hours ago but has still not received a phone call.”
746. An entry at 7.21pm on 8 November 2017 states:
“PRN - spoken with duty PoISA [PoISA A] - he spoke with the Delta a couple of hours ago and advised that he would not be contacting the family members re search areas. [Constable B] is currently the SPOC⁹² for the family, I shall contact him and ask him to contact the cousin to provide some direction.”
747. An entry at 8.22pm on 8 November 2017 states:
“To clarify re the family searching areas. I liaised with the D2, we cannot stop the family searching, however if we task them to an area we will need to provide officers to escort them and we take liability for their safety. The D2 did not want to remove officers from the current search commitments. I asked that an officer be tasked as liaison with the family and relay this info.”
748. An incident log entry at 9.44pm on 8 November 2017 states:
“I have attended the King George car park where DorSAR are situated as they have made me aware of members of the public congregating asking if

⁹⁰ Supervision.

⁹¹ House to house enquiries.

⁹² Single Point of Contact.

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they can help etc. I have spoken to the group and advised them that they are to leave DorSAR to get on with what they are doing and that if they wish [sic] look for the misper then I cannot stop them and I am unable to guide them as all officers are busy. I have spoken to staff on the DorSAR van and made them aware and if they encounter further problems I have advised them to make contact with us.”

749. An LPSM log entry by LPSM C at 9.30pm on 9 November 2017 states:

“Decision: Not to task family and friends for the search. Unable to ensure the safety of the public and unable to pull other dedicated resources away from vital tasks of finding the misper.

Reason: Dorset Police do not have the resources to ensure the safety of any family or friends searching. Members of the public searching could interfere with the search been [sic] conducted by trained volunteers from both the coastguard and Dorset Search and Rescue. Tasking trained search resources without the interference of members of the public is a more effective use of resources. Members of the public are not equipped to be searching in the hours of darkness and as such their safety is paramount.”

750. A Community Impact Assessment was undertaken on 10 November 2017. This document states (in part):

“In order to understand how the communities feel regarding the missing female the following engagement has taken place –

- *Police are monitoring social media to gauge community concerns and tensions.*
- *Regular contact through KINS (Key Individual Networks) this includes local Neighbourhood Watch schemes and other individuals with access to greater numbers of people.*
- *Routine reassurance patrols.*
- *Volunteers who are searching are co-ordinating their searches from two specific locations in Swanage and police are attending these locations every two hours to facilitate any communication. Any concerns are passed back to the community Bronze.*
- *POLSA has liaised with the search co-ordinators and provided search advice to ensure they feel included and keep an open line of communication.*
- *Family and friends contact – daily supervisory oversight [sic] and visits by the community Bronze. Use of personal police phone to ensure open lines of communication with the family to ensure that they feel included and supported alongside the implementation of a FLO.”*

751. The document states that NPT officers and PolSA co-ordinators should ensure there is regular ongoing contact with the volunteers, and that they are kept involved as much as possible.

752. The document states that the two main locations where the searches are being co-ordinated will be visited, and that officers will involve community volunteers in the distribution of leaflets, working directly alongside the police as part of the house-to-house enquiries.

753. An undated document provided by the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant, titled "Volunteer house to house co-ordination", states:

"Between the 10th - 15th November, 30-40 volunteers have conducted H2H enquiries [sic] and leafleted the secondary zones of the outer circle of the 300m search area from the last area where the misper was seen and from [Gaia's aunt's address].

These areas were decided upon consultation with [the House to House Coordinator] and the [PoISC] who provided a search maps [sic] and [the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant] who provided a search brief.

Brief was

- *Can door knock between 17:30-21:00*
- *Only in pairs*
- *Hi-vis*
- *No stepping into people's houses/gardens*
- *Stick to the areas*
- *Visual check for CCTV: Please collate this list of addresses and email direct to me*

Questions

- *Have you seen this person*
- *Call with any information on 101 / 999*
- *Remind them to check their gardens regularly*

On the 15th November 2017 volunteer searchers carried out house to house enquiries around the Langton Matravers area, with assistance from [the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant] providing house to house areas and a briefing regarding safety.

16th November – volunteer searchers are concentrating on the Langton Matravers area, having spoken with [the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant].

A discussion has been made between [the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant] and [Gaia's cousin] (volunteer coordinator) to step back volunteer searches now all areas in Swanage and Langton Matravers have been covered.

The next steps

[REDACTED] has taken over from [Gaia's cousin] as the volunteer coordinator

Advice and guidance has been given by [the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant] to the volunteer co-ordinator, [REDACTED] to carry out the following leafleting/enquiries:

- *Clubs and pubs over the weekend*
- *Brockenhurst College on Mon*
- *Transport hubs again on Tues and Wed.*

[The Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant] is meeting with the co-ordinator/volunteers on a daily basis to review search areas and deployment."

754. A policy log entry at 4.45pm on 17 November 2017 states:

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“Advised re untrained search group numbering 40 asking for current search progress and areas for tasking. Discussed with [PoISA C] and ██████████ ██████████ re the implications [sic] of this search activity and potential areas where they can be safely utilised [sic]. Discussion with [Deputy SIO] and [Director of Investigations] re potential issues with this. Points raised [sic]:

- 1. Safety of searchers due to darkness and hazards in search area. [Director of Investigations] agreed this was a concern and that any activity must be suitably briefed.*
- 2. Tasking of searchers into areas considered likely to contain the MisPer. [The Director of Investigations] agreed that it would not be suitable to give areas planned for further taskings to the north of the cliffs and the east. [The Director of Investigations] agreed search activity from an area to the west and away from our current search areas.*
- 3. Identification of searchers:*
- 4. [The Director of Investigations] agreed that all searchers must provide verified [sic] details and that these must be recorded. I have agreed to identify an area to the west of Worth Matravers that can be safely walked by the untrained searchers.”*

██████████ 755. On 17 November 2017, Family Liaison Officers were given a document titled “MisPer Gaia Pope search update for FLO”, for use when updating the family. This document summarises the actions undertaken thus far, and states:

“When considering volunteer searches again we must consider the effect of any non-police or untrained search on any ongoing investigation.

Firstly and most importantly we have a duty of care to the searchers and the family. We will take every effort to ensure that should the MisPer be located deceased that it this is not by a family member or someone who does not have the training and subsequent support to manage the emotional and traumatic implications.

Further to this we must ensure the physical safety of the searchers especially where searches are being conducted in a hazardous environment such as the Swanage cliffs. We must express that any searches should be path based and that venturing into areas close to cliff edges or quarries is inherently dangerous. We are using specialist coastguard and fire and rescue teams in these areas in order to ensure the safety of our teams and effective searching. We have taken the decision to cease night searching in specific areas due to safety concerns and the effect that this has on the effectiveness of the search. Searching in this terrain not only puts search assets at great risk but it also reduces the effectiveness of the search by at least 50% and increases the search time by up to 300%.

We must further consider the effect of this search on any other areas of the ongoing investigation. While we cannot prevent untrained and untasked search activity taking place we must ask that volunteers work with us to:

- Allow Police search teams to continue unhindered in their specific search activities.*
- Respect Police cordons to minimise the potential traumatic exposure to untrained searchers, maintain the dignity of the MisPer, ensure that the*

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family are properly prepared before any images are obtained and released to the press and preserve evidence.

- *Search with a minimum group of 3 people.*
- *Ensure that under no circumstances, unless clearly conscious and breathing, should anyone touch or interfere with the body in any way and maintain a large sterile area to protect any potential evidence.*
- *Ensure that any persons searching stick to marked routes and areas away from hazards such as mines, quarries, cliffs and bodies of water.*
- *Ensure that we (police) have a record of who is assisting in the untrained search including their full name and address and their identity verified by photo ID.*

In order to allow volunteer searchers to assist with our efforts [the Director of Investigations] has agreed with the PoISC and PoISA's [sic] that we can effectively utilise volunteer searchers to walk the coastal paths west of the village of Worth Matravers past Chapmans [sic] pool toward Warbarrow Bay."

> **Account provided by a College of Policing representative**

- ████ 756. IOPC investigators spoke to the College of Policing representative for the Citizens in Policing Portfolio.
757. He stated that there is no nationally agreed policy on the use of volunteers in missing person searches, and that police forces should use their discretion when considering whether it is appropriate to use volunteers in a police search.
758. He stated that Section 38 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 authorises police forces to grant volunteers limited powers in certain circumstances, including potentially in missing person searches, but to date, the use of Section 38 by police forces has been very limited.

> **Account provided by Police Search Advisor (PoISA) A**

- ████ 759. In his statement dated 23 February 2019, PoISA A stated that at 3.19pm on 8 November 2017, he was informed that thirty members of the public had volunteered to assist with the search in Swanage.
760. He stated that Dorset Police are required to supervise volunteers at a ratio of one officer per eight volunteers, and they did not have the resources to spare. He stated that he therefore suggested that a local officer liaise with the volunteers with a view to conducting house-to-house enquiries and enquiries with local shops, as this was low-risk work that could be easily managed.

> **Account provided by Lost Person Search Manager (LPSM) C**

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- 761. In his statement dated 29 January 2019, LPSM C stated that at some point during the evening of 8 November 2017, DorSAR informed him that members of the public and family members were asking what they could do to help.
 - 762. He stated that Swanage is surrounded by rural land, high cliffs and the sea, and he was conscious of the weather and the fact that it was dark. He stated that he was concerned about putting people at risk by allowing them to carry out searches without training, and so people who were determined to help were asked to hand out leaflets produced by the family, or to drive around local roads looking for Gaia.

> **Account provided by the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant**

- 763. The Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant provided a statement to the IOPC on 8 May 2019.
- 764. He stated that he was aware that Gaia's cousin had set up a "Find Gaia" Facebook page, and was looking for volunteers to assist with the search.
- 765. He stated that he put the volunteers in touch with the PoISC, who provided them with guidance and support including health and safety advice, and advice on where to concentrate their efforts.
- 766. He stated that he also put the volunteers in contact with the House-to-House Co-ordinator. He stated that he was concerned that the volunteers were not known to the police, and had been knocking on people's doors and searching through gardens without proper training or guidance.
- 767. He stated that he created a briefing pack and provided regular briefings for the volunteers before they conducted their searches, and asked them to complete forms documenting their house-to-house enquiries.
- 768. He stated that they eventually reached a point where the volunteers had knocked on every door in their area, so he asked them to focus on major transport hubs, where they handed out leaflets to members of the public.

> **Account provided by the Police Search Co-ordinator (PoISC)**

- 769. In his statement dated 6 March 2019, the PoISC explained that the police have a duty of care towards volunteers, and are responsible both for their physical safety, and for their mental health should they find something distressing. He stressed that the police "*absolutely should not*" put untrained public searchers or family members in a position where they may find a body, or a potential crime scene.
- 770. He explained that the area in which Gaia went missing is surrounded by open ground containing various known and unknown hazards, such as disused quarries and mine works, high, dangerous cliff tops and large bodies of water, including the sea, where it would be highly inadvisable for members of the public to search. He stated that the police would have had to consider all these factors if untrained public searchers had been deployed in those areas.

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771. He stated that, for the above reasons, it is recommended that untrained public searchers be accompanied by a member of the police at a ratio of one police employee to every eight volunteers, which would have had a huge impact on already depleted police resources.
772. He stated that he knew Gaia's family was keen to be involved in the search; however, they had to consider the long-term impact on family members if they had been the ones to find her body.
773. He stated that he also had to take into account the ramifications if a member of the public were to find evidence. He explained that they were conducting a potential murder investigation, and members of the public are not trained in the correct methods of recovering evidence. He stated that, even if told not to touch anything suspicious, the volunteers might have inadvertently contaminated any evidence they found, which could have had a detrimental effect on the investigation.
774. He stated that, having taken the above into account, he suggested that volunteers assist with leaflet drops and searches of areas where there was a very low probability of finding anything evidential.
775. He acknowledged that this might have been frustrating for members of the public who had given up their own time. However, he stated that he remained of the view that this decision was proportionate in the circumstances. He stated that, to the best of his knowledge, the volunteers were not tasked to search areas that had already been searched by police.

> **Analysis of the evidence**

776. Gaia's family alleged that the police failed to communicate properly with the civilian search teams, resulting in a chaotic and disorganised approach to the search.
777. They stated that a Facebook page was set up on 8 November 2017, with a log of locations that had been searched by civilian volunteers. They stated that the police refused to look at it, and that one officer told Gaia's cousin they were "*not allowed to use Facebook.*"
778. They further stated that the police did not contact the volunteers directly until 11 November 2017, and did not allow them to search rural areas due to safety concerns, and did not give them clear instructions on how best to search.
779. Without further details, it has not been possible to identify the officer who allegedly told Gaia's cousin they were "*not allowed to use Facebook.*" However, given that the volunteers were untrained and not vetted, it may be that it would not have been appropriate in any case for Dorset Police to rely too heavily on the log of locations that had been searched by volunteer teams.
780. It is not clear from the evidence when the police first communicated directly with the volunteers. However, the Community Impact Assessment dated 10

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November 2017 states that officers were meeting with volunteers regularly, and that the volunteers were being asked to assist with the distribution of leaflets and with house-to-house enquiries.

781. The briefing document produced by the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant states that, between 10 and 16 November 2017, volunteers conducted house to house enquiries and leaflet drops in the areas within 300 metres of the PLS and Gaia's aunt's address, and in Langton Matravers, and around clubs and pubs, transport hubs, and at Brockenhurst College. This document includes clear instructions for volunteers, and states that the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant was meeting with them daily in order to review search areas and deployment.
782. A policy log entry and FLO briefing document dated 17 November 2017 show that volunteers were asked to walk the coastal paths to the west of Worth Matravers.
783. The evidence indicates that Dorset Police were restricted in the tasks they were able to allocate to civilian volunteers, for a number of reasons.
784. PoISA A and the PoISC both stated that Dorset Police were required to supervise volunteers at a ratio of one officer per eight volunteers, and that they did not have the resources to spare.
785. Dorset Police Missing Persons policy does not mention a requirement to supervise civilian volunteers. However, the College of Policing secure APP states that it is "*good practice*" to appoint officers to manage community search teams, and that volunteers should be assessed to ensure they are dressed and equipped accordingly, registered, PNC checked, briefed, and logged in and out.
786. LPSM C and the PoISC further explained that Swanage is surrounded by hazardous terrain that would pose risks to untrained searchers.
787. The FLO briefing document discusses the risks of allowing volunteers to search the Swanage cliffs. It states that specialist teams were being used to search the areas close to the cliff edges and quarries and that, even then, certain areas were not being searched at night due to safety concerns.
788. The PoISC further explained that he had to consider the mental distress that might be caused if a volunteer found something distressing and, given that it was a murder investigation, there was also a risk of volunteers contaminating evidence.
789. Overall, the evidence suggests that volunteers were discouraged but not expressly forbidden from searching rural areas. For example, a log entry on the evening of 8 November 2017 states that an officer had spoken to one group and told them that, while he could not stop them joining in the search, he was unable to guide them. The abovementioned FLO briefing document also acknowledges that Dorset Police could not prevent "*untrained and untasked search activity*" from taking place.

[REDACTED]

- 799. This officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 11 January 2019. He stated that he and other officers attended Gaia's uncle's home address between 12.30pm and 4.40pm on 10 November 2017. He stated that the purpose of the search was to locate Gaia's mobile phone, a Motorola Moto G Plus handset, which had last been detected at that address.
- 800. He stated that his dog was trained to detect all types of digital devices, including mobile phones, having successfully completed her initial training in May 2017 and a refresher course in January 2018.
- 801. He stated that the flat was [REDACTED] difficult to search, and his dog was unable to search anything above waist height due to her small size. He stated that Gaia's uncle told them he could not find some of his old mobile phones, but then kept bringing them old phones while they were searching.
- 802. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 803. He stated that they searched the garden, Gaia's uncle's vehicle and all of the rooms, including the bedrooms. He stated that his dog searched around and on top of all of the beds, and that if a mobile phone had been there, they would have found it.
- 804. He stated that there was a large basement [REDACTED] with boxed property and loose items, and his dog was unable to conduct a thorough search of that area.
- 805. He stated that his dog "*indicated*" in various parts of the flat, but they did not locate Gaia's phone, and he formed the view that it was not on the premises. He stated that they were tasked to search the flat again, which they did, without success.

> **Account provided by a Licensed Search Officer (LSO) who searched Gaia's uncle's address**

- 806. This officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 31 March 2019.
- 807. He stated that, [REDACTED] there was a "*vast amount*" of property [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 808. He stated that the sheer quantity of property made searching, [REDACTED] extremely difficult. He stated that he informed the search co-ordinators of these limitations, and told them a much larger search team would be required to search the address thoroughly, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 809. He stated that he was told to do the best they could in the circumstances, and that, as the search was not contentious and Gaia's uncle had given his consent, it would be disproportionate to empty the flat.

- [REDACTED]
810. He stated that, prior to the physical search, the Police Dog Handler “swept” the property with his dog, and a Digital Media Investigator interrogated a wireless router and spoke to Gaia’s uncle about various devices that were communicating with it. He stated that there was some disparity between the “attached” devices and those disclosed by Gaia’s uncle, but it was acknowledged that there could be devices outside or in neighbouring properties that were communicating with the router.
811. He stated that Gaia’s uncle took an interest in the search and made general conversation with the searching officers, but did not appear to be trying to obstruct the search, and in many instances, he was [REDACTED] answering officers’ queries [REDACTED]
812. He stated that he recalled Gaia’s uncle explaining that he had misplaced a phone of his and subsequently found it in a bag in the bathroom. He stated that Gaia’s uncle found this phone after the room had been searched by police and the dog, and he notified the Silver Commander of this development, which he considered “odd”. He stated that officers subsequently took possession of this phone, which was a Sony Aqua M4 in a red and black case. He stated that this was the only item seized, and the search concluded at 5pm.
813. He stated:
“Despite the limitations we were faced with I feel it is fair to say that the ground floor (ie the living quarters)... were searched as comprehensively as possible and am confident that an item the size of a mobile telephone would have been located if present.”

> Analysis of the evidence

814. In summary, a dog handler and LSO were both adamant that they would have found Gaia’s phone if it had been in the location where it was later found.
815. While we cannot rule out the possibility of human error, particularly given the volume of property at Gaia’s uncle’s address, it is not clear from the available evidence how a specialist search dog who had successfully completed her initial training within the past six months might have missed a mobile phone that was in clear view.
816. I also note that, according to the officers, Gaia’s uncle tried to help by searching for and bringing them phones he had found, and yet did not see a phone that was allegedly in clear view on one of the beds, either at the time of the search or subsequently.
817. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether this aspect of the evidence highlights any organisational learning or performance issues for Dorset Police.

> The arrests and subsequent murder investigation

> Contemporaneous evidence

818. An OEL entry at 5.13pm on 9 November 2017 states:

"I have attended ██████████ ██████████ ken to [Male A] in person. He states that he has not seen Gaia in the last 6 or 7 months. [Male A] will state that he has known Gaia since they were both about 4 or 5 yrs old. He would describe their relationship as like brother and sister. [Male A] has never been in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship with Gaia and he has never had sex with her. [Male A] will state that they were all part of a large group of friends. About 6/7 months ago [Male A] split up with his girlfriend. Upon which his ex-girlfriend remained within that group and [Male A] has now distanced himself from the group. [Male A] is aware that Gaia had attended [Female A's] address and was making comments that she was pregnant with his child. [Male A] has no idea what she is talking about. [Male A] is friends with Gaia on Facebook and will state that over the weekend Gaia was posting odd messages which were out of character for her. [Male A] does not know where Gaia has gone or would have gone. [Male A] appeared to be honest and co-operative and I had no reason to disbelieve his account."

819. Female A provided a statement on 10 November 2017 regarding her encounter with Gaia on the afternoon of 7 November 2017. She stated that Gaia banged on her door at approximately 3.30pm, and she let her in. She stated that Gaia was visibly sweating, and removed several items of clothing. She further stated that Gaia's speech and behaviour were irrational and she was very distressed, but that it was not clear why. She stated that Gaia left after approximately 20 minutes, saying she was going to see Female B. She stated that she was able to persuade Gaia to put some of her clothes back on before leaving, but she refused her jacket, claiming she was too hot.

820. Male A provided a statement on 10 November 2017 to the effect that he had had no contact with Gaia for approximately a year, and had not seen her on 7 November 2017.

821. He stated that Female A called him at home at around 3.30pm to say that Gaia was at her house. He stated that he could hear Gaia saying "random words" in the background during that call, and that Female A called him again five or ten minutes later to say that she had gone.

822. He stated that he messaged Gaia on Facebook at 7.30pm that evening, asking her to come to his house, but she did not reply.

823. Male B provided a statement on 11 November 2017 to the effect that he had not seen Gaia for over two years.

824. Two officers later provided statements confirming that they spoke to Male B on 11 November 2017. They stated that he was co-operative, and invited them to search his vehicle without prompting. They stated that the inside of the car appeared very clean and tidy.
825. An OEL entry at 1.47pm on 12 November 2017 states:
“***Spoke to [Male B] of [REDACTED] 12112017***
On the 07th November 2017, [Male B] was working all day out at his [REDACTED] [sic] [REDACTED] [address [REDACTED] this property has been owned by [REDACTED] for the last [REDACTED] years. He was not 100% certain but he was pretty sure he did not leave [REDACTED] until he left to come home for the evening. If he did go out it would only be to the local shop. At some point during the day he thinks he had a conversation with a neighbour that he only knows as [REDACTED].
[Male B] did say that the police are welcome to have the keys for [REDACTED] or he will meet us there with the keys but we are welcome to look around [REDACTED].
[Male B] thinks he arrived back home [REDACTED] at about 1630 hours on the 7th, the route he took home was the dual [sic] carriageway to Wool and then onto [REDACTED] is his usual route, but sometimes he goes on the road from the roundabout where the turning for Dorset Police HQ towards Wool down the High Street and will stop at the [REDACTED] and buy a coffee to go, he is not sure if he did this on the 7th or not but he could have called that night.
[Male B] stated that when he got back to [Female A’s house, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] he did not go out again all evening, he stayed with [Female A] talking, until the following morning when he returned to do some more decorating at [REDACTED] he is not sure what time he left in the morning but thinks it was between 0800 and 0830 hours on the 8th November.
[Male B] also said he has an Apple iPhone that has a location thing on it and that Dorset Police are more than welcome to have a look at his phone.
[Male B] said that last time he saw Gaia was when [Male A] used to be friendly with her but they are not as friendly these days so he thinks it has been about two years since he has seen her.”
826. A policy log entry by the PoISC at 3pm on 12 November 2017 states that two victim recovery dogs would be deployed on Monday to assist with searches in the area surrounding Female A’s address.
827. A policy log entry by the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) at 4.23pm on 12 November 2017 states that Male A had been identified as a suspect. The reasons given were:
- Gaia stated that he had impregnated her.
 - He “didn’t respond to [Female A] in distress with Gaia at the house [REDACTED]”.
 - Male A reportedly visited Female A later for tea, which was not corroborated by CCTV footage.
 - Gaia had no history of suicide or self harm.
 - Male A tried to connect with Gaia on Facebook at 7.30pm.

- Gaia was last seen at Female A's address.

828. A policy log entry at 10.30am on 13 November 2017 states:

"MCIT morning meeting attended by [the PoISC] – this is now a murder enquiry. This is an [sic] addition to our search parameters where possible searches based on the missing ill injured or suicidal will continue."

829. Female A was arrested on suspicion of murder at 3.25pm. The arrest was recorded as being necessary to allow the prompt and effective investigation of the offence, and to prevent loss or damage to property.

830. Male A was arrested on suspicion of murder at 4pm. The arrest was recorded as being necessary to allow the prompt and effective investigation of the offence, and to prevent the disappearance of the suspect.

831. An OEL entry at 11.55pm on 13 November 2017 states:

****DS Review – Suspect Disposal***

As Interview Manager I am writing this rationale based on the previous direction given to me by SIO [REDACTED].

Two PACE accounts have been obtained from [Female A]. At this stage there is no further evidence to be put to [Female A] that justifies her continued detention overnight, [REDACTED].

At this time [Female A's] [sic] home address is held under powers of a PACE warrant for ongoing CSI⁹³ exam. As such there is no risk of evidence being lost or destroyed by [Female A's] [sic] release...

No risks in relation to [Female A], or to any third parties have been identified that would necessitate the need for conditional pre-charge bail to be applied for.

Given all of the above, I am satisfied that [Female A] should be released under investigation at this time. Should new evidence necessitate further interviews of [Female A], a further arrest can be considered on that basis."

832. Female A's custody record shows that she was released under investigation at 12.15am on 14 November 2017.

833. One of Female A's neighbours provided a statement to police on 14 November 2017, to the effect that [REDACTED] had seen Male A and Gaia together several times that year⁹⁴.

834. One of Female A's neighbours provided a statement to police on 14 November 2017, to the effect that [REDACTED] had seen Male A and Gaia together at least five times that year.

835. One of Female A's neighbours provided a statement to police on 14 November 2017 detailing an encounter between Female A and Male B on 10 November 2017. [REDACTED] stated that [REDACTED] saw Male B remove a pile of transparent

⁹³ Crime Scene Investigators.

⁹⁴ In subsequent press interviews, Male A and [REDACTED] suggested that neighbours may have mistaken his new girlfriend for Gaia.

[REDACTED]

plastic bags from the boot of his vehicle and hand them to Female A, who then moved quickly out of sight. [REDACTED] stated that Male B then removed a box from his boot, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

836. [REDACTED] stated that approximately three hours later, [REDACTED] saw Male B outside wiping down the box with a cloth. [REDACTED] stated that Male B gave [REDACTED] an "evil stare" when [REDACTED] saw [REDACTED] watching.

837. A policy log entry by the SIO at 11.09am on 14 November 2017 states that Male B had been identified as a suspect. The reasons given were:

- He lived at the address where Gaia was last seen.
- Witnesses had reported unusual activity outside that address.
- He was "unusually helpful" to officers on 11 November 2017, inviting them to search his vehicle.
- Following a search of Male B's vehicle, an officer observed that it appeared to have been valeted.
- Male B's movements would put him at the address at the material time, which he denied in his statement.
- [REDACTED].
- Female A had already been arrested and released under investigation.

838. An OEL entry at 3.28pm on 14 November 2017 states:

****DS Review – Suspect Disposal [Male A]***

As Interview Manager I am writing this rationale based on consultation with, and direction given to me by SIO [REDACTED].

Three PACE accounts have been obtained from [Male A]. At this stage there is no further evidence to be put to [Male A] that justifies further interviews, and the necessity for an application for a Supt extension under S.42 PACE. I am not aware of any enquiries that will lead to the availability of new evidence in respect of [Male A] within the remaining PACE clock (less than 90 mins).

At this time [Male A's] [sic] home address is held under powers of a PACE warrant for ongoing CSI exam. As such there is no risk of evidence being lost or destroyed by [Male A's] [sic] release. No risks in relation to [Male A], or to any third parties have been identified that would necessitate the need for conditional pre-charge bail to be applied for in order to safeguard any individual from the risk of immediate harm...

Given all of the above, I am satisfied that [Male A] should be released under investigation at this time. Should new evidence necessitate further interviews of [Male A], a further arrest can be considered by the SIO on that basis."

839. Male A's custody record shows that he was released under investigation at 3.44pm on 14 November 2017.

840. An OEL entry at 4.04pm on 15 November 2017 states:

"DI REVIEW

Suspect [Male B] dob [REDACTED] is currently sought for murder and his whereabouts are unknown. The SIO has designated him suspect status and

[REDACTED]

there is sufficient evidence to suspect his involvement. Numerous enqs have been conducted to locate which have proved unsuccessful. These enqs will continue however he needs to be circulated as wanted should he be stopped out of force.”

- 841. Male B was arrested on suspicion of murder at 2.57pm on 16 November 2017. The arrest was recorded as being necessary to allow the prompt and effective investigation of the offence, to prevent loss or damage to property, to prevent physical injury, and to prevent the disappearance of the suspect.
- 842. His custody record shows that he was released under investigation at 3.52pm on 17 November 2017.

> **Account provided by the Gold Commander**

- 843. In his statement dated 17 April 2019, the Gold Commander stated that he asked the Major Crime duty SIO to attend Wareham Police Station on the morning of 12 November 2017. He explained that, while he was keeping an open mind, he could not rule out the possibility of a criminal act.
- 844. He stated that he attended a briefing at 10am on 12 November 2017, led by the Silver Commander. He stated that there were inconsistencies and inaccuracies in some of the accounts provided by witnesses in the place where Gaia was last seen, which raised concerns that a criminal act may have taken place. He stated that he therefore considered it appropriate to commission a peer review by a PiP3 SIO.
- 845. He stated that he later met with the SIO, FIC C and the Silver Commander, and decided that MCIT should take ownership of the investigation.
- 846. He stated that he authorised the deployment of cadaver dogs at 4.03pm.
- 847. He stated that, at that time, his hypotheses were as follows:
 1. Gaia had suffered a medical episode and her location was unknown.
 2. Gaia had suffered a medical episode and was currently concealed in a premises.
 3. Gaia had committed suicide^{*} in an unknown location.
 4. Gaia had come to harm as the result of a criminal act.
 5. Gaia was safe and well and unwilling to disclose her whereabouts.
- 848. He stated that he attended the SIO briefing at Poole Police Station at 9am on 16 November 2017, at which time he reviewed the investigation with the Director of Investigations. He stated that he was content that the investigation remained open-minded and was not focused solely on the possibility of third party involvement, as reflected by the fact that wider searches were still being undertaken.

> **Account provided by the Deputy SIO**

[REDACTED]

- 849. The Deputy SIO provided a statement to the IOPC on 18 April 2019.
- 850. He stated that the SIO made the decision to arrest the suspects, but he agreed that it was an important line of enquiry. He stated that Female A was the last person to see Gaia alive, and at that time, there were no known CCTV or witness sightings of Gaia after she left Female A's address.
- 851. He stated that in light of this, and in light of the concerns that had been raised in relation to the suspects' accounts, the SIO decided that the suspects should be arrested to enable them to explore the hypothesis of possible criminal involvement. He stated that the investigation continued to explore other hypotheses as well, and he was satisfied that the arrests did not detract from the missing person investigation.

> **Account provided by the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO)**

- 852. The SIO provided a statement to the IOPC on 20 May 2019.
- 853. He stated that he retired from the role of Temporary Detective Chief Inspector in August 2016, but continued working as a Police Staff SIO.
- 854. He stated that SIOs must have a level 3 PIP accreditation, and that he has held this level of accreditation for over ten years. He stated that he had been the SIO in eleven homicide investigations, all of which resulted in convictions, and since taking up his police staff role, he had been the SIO in two homicide investigations that resulted in convictions.
- 855. He stated that he considered the following hypotheses in Gaia's case:
 1. She had left of her own accord, and was safe and well, but did not wish to make contact or was unable to do so.
 2. She had left of her own accord, but had come to harm through intervention or accident.
 3. Her disappearance was suspicious and she was a victim of crime.
- 856. He stated that he focused on Male A and [REDACTED] because of the discrepancies in their accounts. He stated that Female A was the last person to see Gaia alive, CCTV footage showed Gaia running towards that address, and nobody had seen her leaving the address.
- 857. He stated that he decided on this basis that Male A, Female A and Male B should be arrested. He stated that, in his opinion, the arrests did not hinder the search in any way.
- 858. He stated that after Gaia was found, he attended the scene with the Crime Scene Manager, and based on her location, the lack of any injuries to suggest third party involvement, and the lack of evidence of an attack in the area where her clothes were found, they decided there was no need to call a Pathologist to the scene before recovering Gaia's body.

> **Account provided by the Forensic Pathologist**

- ████████████████████
859. The Forensic Pathologist provided a statement to the IOPC on 28 August 2018.
860. He stated that the South West Forensics Regional Forensic Co-ordinator called him on the afternoon of 18 November 2017, and informed him that the body of a young woman had been found in undergrowth near Swanage.
861. He stated that, given the nature of the scene, the weather conditions, the time of day and his travelling time from ██████, they agreed that there was no requirement for him to attend the scene, and that any samples could be taken in the mortuary. He stated that he would not consider this decision to be unusual in the circumstances.

> **Account provided by the Police Search Co-ordinator (PoISC)**

862. In his statement dated 6 March 2019, the PoISC stated that the premises searches did not take place until 16 and 17 November 2017, following forensic examination and deployment of a victim recovery dog. He stated that the suspects' vehicles were not searched.
863. He stated that the premises searches took approximately 120 individual officer hours, whereas the overall search for Gaia took 1050 individual officer hours. He expressed the view that the premises searches did not detract from the search for Gaia.
864. He stated that they continued searching for her, and given that nine days had elapsed by that point, if Gaia was outside, it was considered highly likely that she would have succumbed to hypothermia, illness or injury within the first few days. He stated that, as a result, the premises searches would have had minimal impact on the chances of finding Gaia alive.

> **Analysis of the evidence**

865. Gaia's family queried whether the arrests were lawful. They stated that they were told the police arrested Male A and Female A because their stories "*did not add up*"; which turned out to be because the clock on a CCTV camera was faulty.
866. They stated the police told them that, due to a recent change in policy, arresting someone on suspicion of murder was the only way they could search their address and interview them over a sufficient period. They stated that this explanation was confusing, and implied that the police did not have reasonable grounds to suspect an offence.
867. The family expressed the view that the arrests discouraged the civilian volunteers, and may have had an impact on the police search, specifically on the deployment of helicopters.
868. Under Section 24 of PACE 1984, a constable may arrest anyone whom he has reasonable grounds to suspect of having committed an offence, provided

[REDACTED]

he also has reasonable grounds for believing that an arrest is necessary. The evidential threshold for an arrest is intentionally low, and may be satisfied by circumstantial evidence alone.

869. A policy log entry by the SIO at 4.23pm on 12 November 2017 states that Male A had been identified as a suspect.
870. One of the reasons given for the arrest was that CCTV footage did not support Male A's claim that he had visited Female A later on the day Gaia went missing. However, it is clear from the evidence that this was not the sole basis for his arrest.
871. The evidence indicates that the primary factor was that Gaia went missing after saying she was going to see Male A. Female A was the last person to report seeing Gaia, and she had not been seen leaving that address, and had not been found following extensive searches.
872. The decision to arrest Male A also took into account the fact that he had apparently not taken any action after learning that Gaia was at Female A's house in a distressed state, and the fact that he had tried to communicate with her on Facebook that evening, and finally Gaia's claim that he had impregnated her.
873. Following his arrest, two witnesses provided statements alleging that they had seen Gaia with Male A several times that year, contrary to his account.
874. The evidence indicates that Male B was arrested after a witness reported seeing him and Female A behaving suspiciously three days after Gaia's disappearance. Moreover, the officers who spoke to Male B on 11 November 2017 reported that he was "*unusually helpful*", inviting them to search his car, and that his car was very clean and tidy. Male B was also suspected of being present at Female A's address when Gaia was there, which he had previously denied. [REDACTED].
875. It does not appear that a rationale was recorded in support of the decision to arrest Female A.
876. The evidence indicates that search activity continued after the murder investigation was declared, and that third party involvement was just one of a number of hypotheses under consideration.
877. It is not possible to say from the available evidence whether members of the public were discouraged from joining in the search after a murder investigation was declared. However, even if they had been, this alone would not have justified failing to act, if the SIO had reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence had been committed.
878. Dorset Police missing persons policy does say that all staff taking or reviewing a report of a missing person must initially take the view that it is a potential serious crime enquiry, and that, if there is any doubt surrounding the

circumstances of a person's disappearance, officers should consider murder as a hypothesis, and that failure to do so may compromise the investigation.

879. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the arrest decisions were prompted by a recent change in policy. The arrest criteria, time limits for detention and search powers following an arrest for an indictable offence have not undergone any substantial relevant amendments since the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in 1984.
880. The lawfulness of the arrests is something that only a court can decide, having heard all of the evidence, including evidence given under cross-examination. However, it will fall to the decision maker to consider whether the above evidence highlights any individual performance issues or organisational learning for Dorset Police.

> The discovery of Gaia's clothing

> Contemporaneous evidence

881. At 10.24am on 16 November 2017, a member of the public called Dorset Police to report that she had found a pair of grey leggings, a white vest, a pair of white trainers and female underwear in a field near the cliffs.
882. A policy log entry at 10.30am on 16 November 2017 states:
"Advised that clothing matching the description of that worn by Gaia has been located in a field north of the mile markers by blackers hole. Clothing is in the corner of a drystone walled field with one wall between the clothing and the upper cliff path. This is at approximately 2000 meters from PLS."
883. An entry at 10.45am states that attending officers had been advised to stand off and preserve any traces of foot or tyre marks. A further entry at 11am states that a drone had been deployed to assist with an aerial search.
884. An entry at 11.20am states:
"Consideration for tasking 300-400 meter search taskings from new LKP based on clothing being that worn by Gaia POPE. Clothing described as white trainer, silver grey leggings, a blue denim shirt, a white and red cowboy style shirt a pink bra and some knickers. These items are spread over approx 20 meters and appear to be taken off while moving in the direction of the upper cliff path. Request to task PST and CG to assist in searching this area due to steep ground and cliffs."
885. An entry at 12pm states:
"In comunication [sic] with officers at scene with clothing. CSI on route with drone for aerial photography. NPAS aslo [sic] requested for stills and search

[REDACTED]

in area. Marine section re-tasked to specific location below the mile markers. Coastguard requested to assist with searching.”

886. An entry at 1.30pm states:

“Deployed to scen [sic] IC [NCA National Search Advisor]. Initial assessment conducted. Area comprises open fields bordered by thick scrub and dry stone walls. The fields run to the upper cliff path where they turn to a steep slope heading down toward the cliff over approx 100-200 meters. This is a nature reserve [sic] and comprises thick scrub long grass and areas of sinkage and slip that are quite hazardous. DorSAR teams requested to attend to assist with searches.”

887. An entry at 2pm states:

“Coastguard and police teams tasked with searches around clothing find. Due to the density of scrub teams have been briefed to work in a tight line formation and check in every bush and gap in the dry stone walling.”

■ 888. A policy log entry at 5.30pm states:

“PST stood down due to long search hours and failing light. The lower steep section is now hazardous to search due to uneven steep ground, dangerous holes and areas of slip. Searching in this environment in darkness is ineffective [sic] and dangerous for the teams. As such I have directed CG and DorSAR teams to withdraw and focus on the flat upper areas to the north east and west of the clothing find.”

889. An entry at 8.30pm states:

“Tel call to [the PoISC] and NCA [National Search Advisor] - cliff areas still require [sic] extensive searching. This will continue tomorrow (17/11). [The PoISC] to attend briefing at MCIT and [name redacted]/[PoISA C] will complete taskings for Coastguard and Team 2 to continue at Cliff...”

■ 890. A policy log entry at 7am on 17 November 2017 states:

“Morning search review: Searches of the Swanage cliff continued into darkness utilising [sic] coastguard and with DorSAR standing down at 2315hrs with no further significant finds. A large area of hazardous ground running toward the cliff remains unsearched as it was risk assessed by myself [sic] as unsafe to continue searches in that area. These areas comprise of long grass brambles and dense bushes. These are to be retasked today in daylight and line searched in high detail. Coastguard teams are re-attending to assist with areas within 3 meters of the cliff and beyond cliff fencing. Marine section are tasked for a base of cliff search again from Chapmans [sic] Pool and Durlleston [sic] head.”

891. An entry at 9am states:

“Attend morning briefing. SIO advised re ongoing search activity and progress from previous evening. While searches are ongoing in relation to [the suspect addresses] and dive searches, the primary push is to search the areas to the south of the clothing find with as much detail as possible within hours of daylight. The environemt [sic] remains uncondusive for night searches and as such I have advised that all searches in that area stop at sunset.”

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892. An entry at 9.15am states:

“Mobile with [PoISA C] to conduct recce and ground appreciation of the area. On scene at clifftop, north of Blackers Hole. Liaise with [the Swanage Coastguard Station Officer] and [the MCA Senior Coastal Operations Officer]. Agreed strategy for search; Coastguard reps will form a line and LSO’s [sic] will be either side to conduct a line search, with consideration of Critical separation as not only is the body being searched for but also a missing sock. DWFRS also attending and will also filter in to the search in the same format. Due to close proximity of the press and other MOP if there is a find then the phrase ██████████’ will be used. Searchers will stand off from the search having marked the area on the map and retain full visual observation. CSI will then be called in to deal.”

893. An entry at 9.35am states:

“Meeting with [NCA National Search Advisor]. Discussions re hypothermic scenario where a subject may remove clothing VS another manic episode. In considering possible variations on these scenarios I am happy that neither would effect [sic] the imidiate [sic] search parameters. Each would describe the subject as being in a confused or disorientated state, in a dark wet environment. The walls of the field would appear to act as a channel into the seaward corner and provide a relitively [sic] easy crossing point. This would then potentially [sic] chanell [sic] the subject down hill into the primary search areas of A12 17112017 and A13 17112017.” (████████████████████

894. An entry at 3pm states that two area dogs would attend.

████████ 895. A policy log entry at 4.30pm states that the search of the cliff top area had been halted due to low light and safety considerations.

896. An entry at 6.30pm states that a Search and Rescue Team volunteer dog had found a sock in area A12.

897. An entry by the PoISC at 10pm states (in part):

“The find of clothing and the manner in which it was distributed across the ground would indicate that it was removed whilst the subject was on the move. This could be due to paradoxical undressing induced by hypothermia or a manic episode. In the case of hypothermia it is likely that the subject would instinctively seek shelter and may burrow into vegetation or curl up into a foetal position. Searchers must be briefed to this effect and the level of search must be detailed as the subject may be very difficult to see. Again it is statistically likely that she remains within 300 meters of the clothing and extensive searches are ongoing in this area.”

████████ 898. A policy log entry by PoISA C at 9am on 18 November 2017 states:

“Search review: The location of a sock within A12 is significant and indicates that the subject may have moved from the location of the clothing into this area. The find will need to be located and varified [sic]. Teams briefed at Swanage ICP and tasked with continuing searches in area A13. Search pair tasked to re locate sock based on described location by area dog.”

899. An entry at 10.15am states:

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“Discussion [sic] with ██████████ DorSAR team leader with regard to redeployment [sic] of teams into A12 17112017 based on sock find. Teams are already deployed and searching in area A13. It is impractical to withdraw teams from A13 as this will effect search progress and accuracy. Decision made to complete A13 then redeploy search assets into A12.”

900. An entry at 2.30pm states:

“Teams re tasked to search densely [sic] scrubbed steep area of ground below zig zag path.”

901. An entry at 3.15pm states:

“Misper Located by LSO ██████████ Described as a steep and densely [sic] vegetated [sic] area of slip. SIO/CSI advised re find. DWFRS to assist with recovery due to steep ground and access issues.”

██████ 902. On 20 November 2017, a Berkshire Search and Rescue Dogs volunteer emailed ██████████ of the organisation as follows:

“I have to say this was the most disorganised Search I have ever attended. There was no formal control or even recording of who was Searching where, other then the foot teams who were busy with a line Search. ██████████ from Hants L3 who arrived with his dog at the same time aproached [sic] the line Search team leader and they identified two heavy areas of brambles that would be suitable for area dogs which we allocated between us. In the absence of control we allocated our selves a working channel.

As dusk arrived the search was stood down which was frustrating having only completed one small area.

I think my overall feeling is one of a waste of time though poor deployment and assignment but I also know what a difficult task running an effective control can be.

Obviously a sad end.”

903. The ██████████ replied:

“This was an odd one, no doubt. The issue came from our initial deployment came from Dorset Digs [sic] as a direct result of the Polsa wanting “everything you’ve got” of course he wasn’t necessarily aware that everything means 10+ dogs and over 100 foot Team personnel. It was after this initial callout that the LR major incident plan swung into place and the deployment was then scaled back to actually suit the tasking. [██████████] from DORSET dogs did apologise about this, but explained the above.”

> **Account provided by the Farmer who rented the land where Gaia was found**

██████ 904. The Farmer who was renting the land where Gaia was found provided an account to the IOPC on 20 May 2019. He stated that, the day after Gaia went missing, he moved some cattle from the field where her clothing was later found. He stated that he did not notice any clothing in the field, and did not re-enter that field after moving his cattle.

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> **Account provided by one of the walkers who found Gaia's clothes**

905. This member of the public provided a statement to the IOPC on 25 March 2019. He stated that he and his granddaughter left their house at approximately 9.45am on 16 November 2017, to go for a walk along one of the coastal paths.
906. He explained that there were three paths leading to Swanage, and the path he chose led through privately-owned fields.
907. He stated that they missed the gate to exit one of the fields, and ended up in the corner of the field, having left the path. He stated that just as they were about to turn back, his granddaughter noticed some clothing, including a pair of grey leggings, which he recognised from a photograph as belonging to Gaia. He stated that there were "*small bundles of clothing all over*", with the heavier outer garments closest to where they were standing.
908. He stated that he called 999, and they waited at the scene until officers arrived. He stated that the officers were "*quick and professional*" in their handling of the situation; however, he was confused as to how the clothing was missed during previous searches of the field.

> **Account provided by a volunteer search and rescue dog handler**

909. The volunteer search and rescue dog handler provided a statement to the IOPC on 17 May 2019.
910. He stated that he received a call asking if he could assist with the search at approximately 11am on 17 November 2017, and at midday, he received a text message informing him of the rendezvous point. He stated that he attended and was briefed by a member of the HM Coastguard team, and started searching at approximately 2.50pm.
911. He stated that it was the most disorganised search he had ever attended. He explained that he was not briefed on what to do if he found Gaia, there was no mobile phone signal, and their radios were not compatible with those used by HM Coastguard, so they had no means of direct contact with Control. He stated that he arranged to stay in contact with another search and rescue dog team from Hampshire, as their radios were compatible.
912. He stated that he was tasked to search a gully that search teams had been unable to access on foot, but which was more easily accessible to a dog. He stated that it was a particularly difficult area to access because of the brambles, and he was surprised to find a sock on top of the grass. He stated that the sock appeared fresh, and he formed the view that it could not have been there for more than a few days.
913. He stated that, at that time, he had not been told that Gaia had removed her clothing, and had not been told that they were looking for clothing, but

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because it was an unusual find, he photographed the sock in situ at 3.08pm and noted the grid reference. He stated that he was searching for a whole person, and as such, he considered the sock interesting but not a priority. He stated that daylight was limited, and his priority was to find Gaia.

914. He stated that he concluded the search at approximately 4.31pm, partly due to the failing light, but also because the other dog team had completed their search and he would have been left with no means of communication after they left. He stated that he was not comfortable with this, as they were moving closer to the cliff and away from the rendezvous point, and he felt it was unsafe to continue. He stated that if it had not been for the lack of contact, he would have continued to search and he believed he would have found Gaia.
915. He stated that he returned to the rendezvous point, and explained why it had been necessary for him to stop searching. He stated that there were police in the area, and he informed an officer that he had found a sock, and emailed him the photograph and grid reference at 4.25pm.

> **Account provided by the National Crime Agency (NCA)
National Search Advisor**

- ██████████ 916. In his statement dated 1 October 2019, the NCA National Search Advisor stated that he was asked to attend the Dorset MCIT office in Poole on the morning of 16 November 2017. He stated that he met with the PoISC on arrival, who informed him that clothing had been found in a field near the coastal path.
917. He stated that he and the PoISC made their way to the scene, in order to assess what search actions should be undertaken next. He stated that they were met by a Police Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) operator, Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) and members of the HM Coastguard volunteer search and rescue team. He stated that ideally the situation would have benefited from trained Ground Sign Aware (GSA) searchers, but none were available at the time and they considered it inappropriate to delay further.
918. He stated that the UAS and CSI resources examined the field where the clothing had been found, and the PoISC re-tasked the available police and HM Coastguard search teams to commence a search of the fields to the south-east.
919. He stated that, in order to further progress the search, he recommended that the PoISC sought agreement from the SIO to use other trained volunteer searchers from DorSAR.
920. He stated that the pattern of discarded clothing suggested Gaia had been moving south across the field, but away from the farm gates. He stated that there were two areas of exposed stone wall on the southern field boundary, free from hedgerow and foliage, which appeared to provide the easiest passage out of the field.
921. He stated that, based on anecdote and experience, people will often follow the natural lay of the land when on foot. He stated that the terrain to the south

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of the field boundary appeared to funnel into a large area of untended scrubland, full of dense foliage and gorse bushes, and he concluded that Gaia was likely to be in that area if she had not reached the cliffs.

922. He stated that light was failing by the time further resources arrived, and he recommended that this area was searched at first light, predominantly for safety reasons, as the terrain was very steep and uneven, but also because he considered that the likelihood of finding Gaia in that area in failing light was very low.
923. He stated that following the arrival of further search teams from HM Coastguard and DorSAR, the level, less hazardous and/or overgrown fields to the north, east and west of the field containing the clothing were tasked out to be searched.
924. He stated that he returned to the MCIT office the next day, where he made the following recommendations:
- 1) A Forensic Clinical Psychologist⁹⁵ should be consulted in an effort to understand Gaia's reported erratic behaviour, and potentially her subsequent removal of her clothing.
 - 2) The fields surrounding the clothing should be searched by trained search units with close critical spacing, to ensure that Gaia was found if she was there.
 - 3) A Forensic Oceanographer should be asked to carry out a reassessment of tidal flows, focusing on a more refined area directly south of the found clothing.
 - 4) That, for the time being, officers should disregard the hypothesis that Gaia had come to harm as a result of third party involvement (to be reassessed once the area around the clothing had been searched).
 - 5) The SIO should set proportionate search parameters, to enable the PoISA to adequately plan for and resource the search.
925. He stated that he was informed on 19 November 2017 that Gaia had been found.

> **Account provided by Police Search Advisor (PoISA) C**

- ████ 926. PoISA C provided a statement to the IOPC on 22 February 2019.
927. He stated that he was first deployed on 17 November 2017, by which time all search areas had been identified and mapped by other PoISAs. He stated that his role was to manage search assets on the ground, including officers, the Fire Service, HM Coastguard, and DorSAR.
928. He stated that clothing had been found on 16 November 2017 near Blacker's Hole, which was a potentially hazardous sloping cliff top area with a lot of gorse and scrub. He stated that he deployed all available resources in the

⁹⁵ The Forensic Clinical Psychologist was not consulted.

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area where the clothing had been found. He stated that they had to take great care when searching, and consequently progress was slow.

929. He stated that a search and rescue dog from Hampshire had found a sock earlier that day, but the handler did not initially connect it to Gaia, and only reported the find to Dorset Police after dark.
930. He stated that they resumed the search the following day, and he deployed a pair of officers in the area where the sock had been found. He stated that the officers located the sock, and confirmed that it belonged to Gaia. He stated that he then deployed all resources in that area, and later that afternoon, an officer found Gaia deceased in a clump of gorse. He stated that the officer had to burrow his way in, as Gaia was very well hidden.

> **Account provided by the Licensed Search Officer (LSO) who found Gaia**

- █ 931. This officer provided a statement confirming that he began searching area A12 at 2.30pm on 18 November 2017. He described the area as a strip of land approximately 40-50m wide, covered by dense foliage and gorse, bordered by a dry stone wall.
932. He stated that at approximately 2.45pm, he followed a path that appeared to be used by animals, as it was covered by gorse and protruding branches. He stated that he crawled approximately six feet uphill under the gorse, at which point he saw Gaia lying approximately eight or nine metres away.
933. He stated that there were a number of large rocks in the area, and Gaia was lying with her head near to a light-coloured rock.

> **Account provided by a Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) who attended the scene**

- █ 934. In a statement dated 18 February 2018, the CSI stated that he attended and examined Gaia's body in situ.
935. He stated that Gaia was found in dense undergrowth approximately twenty feet below the Zig Zag coastal path. He stated that there was no established pathway to the scene from any direction, and Gaia had deep cuts and scratches on her legs, arms and back. He stated that he considered it very likely that these injuries were caused by Gaia walking and/or crawling through the undergrowth to the location where she was found.
936. He stated that he was aware that hypothermia can cause a person to become confused, undress, and seek a place where they feel safe. He stated that he formed the view that Gaia entered the undergrowth as a result of this "burrowing" reflex, or perhaps fell down the slope from the path.

> Expert opinions on the time and cause of death

937. The Forensic Pathologist conducted a post mortem examination on 19 November 2017. In a report dated 7 February 2018, he noted that the post-mortem changes were *“in keeping with death having occurred a number of days prior to discovery of the body”*. He stated that, while it was not possible to determine the date of death based on the pathological features alone, the findings were *“not inconsistent”* with death having occurred on the day Gaia went missing.
938. In closing, he stated:
“Overall, I am of the opinion that Gaia Pope-Sutherland died as a result of hypothermia. I note that her body was naked and that her clothing was recovered from a nearby field. ‘Paradoxical undressing’ is a feature of some hypothermic deaths. It is thought to be due to a paradoxical feeling of warmth as a consequence of confusion and the physiological changes of hypothermia. This may also be associated with ‘hide and die’ behaviour whereby an individual suffering from hypothermia burrows into an enclosed space. In this case it is not clear whether the removal of the clothing was as a direct consequence of the hypothermia or as a consequence of the deterioration in her mental health with the effects of undressing causing the hypothermia. The location of her body may be as a consequence of ‘hide and die’ behaviour or simply due to confusion and disorientation in the dark whilst suffering from hypothermia.”
939. He stated that it was not possible to determine whether Gaia had suffered a seizure that contributed to her death.
940. In a report dated 19 April 2018, a Research Entomologist stated that death was most likely to have occurred at a time prior to 11 November 2017, but that it was not possible to be any more precise than this.

> Analysis of the evidence

941. Gaia’s family expressed their distress and concern over how long it took to find Gaia’s clothes, and her body. They stated that Gaia’s clothes were found on a direct route from where she was last seen, and should have been visible from the upper coastal path⁹⁶.
942. As outlined previously, the CCTV footage of Gaia on Priests Road was not discovered until after her body was found. Accordingly the last recorded sighting of her was on Morrison Road, running south in the direction of Male A’s address.

⁹⁶ IOPC scene visits indicate that the clothing would not have been visible from the coastal path, and that a person would have needed to be in the field (or looking over the wall into the field) to see it.

- ████████████████████
943. Female A stated that Gaia left her address saying she was going to see Female B, who lived south of Morrison Road.
944. There is no direct route from Priests Road to the cliffs. The most obvious route (and the one walked by IOPC investigators) is shown in ██████████ ██████████. In order to reach the field where the clothing was found, Gaia would have had to leave the path and climb over a gate, or over the field wall.
945. At that time, there was no evidence or intelligence to suggest Gaia had taken this particular route. The evidence did indicate a southerly direction of travel, but this was only because the destinations Gaia had in mind (namely Male A's address and Female B's address) happened to lie in that direction. Once she apparently decided not to visit Female B, there were numerous other routes she could feasibly have taken, leading to alternative locations. Dancing Ledge and the Zig Zag coastal path were not the only locations suggested by her family, and, other than the fact that she liked those locations, there was no reliable intelligence to suggest that she may have gone there.
946. As outlined above, the area where Gaia's clothing was found had not previously been searched by Dorset Police or any other official agency. Area A12, south of the clothing, and where Gaia was eventually found, was searched by HM Coastguard on 8 November 2017. However, this was a route and track search with a low POD. The PoISC stated that they considered deploying further search teams to this area, but eventually concluded that the route and track searches combined with the NPAS search were sufficient, based on the information and intelligence available at that time.
947. Dorset Police were made aware of the discovery of the clothing at 10.24am on 16 November 2017. Log entries indicate that they immediately recognised the significance of this evidence, and resources were deployed to the area promptly. While teams continued searching into the night, they did not cover the area where Gaia was found, as it was unsafe and overgrown.
948. Log entries indicate that search activity resumed the following morning, and an entry at 9am stated that the search would focus on the areas to the south of the clothing. However, this was to be a line search, with minimal separation between searchers, as the object was not only to find Gaia, but also a missing sock that was not among the abandoned clothing. Moreover, PoISA C explained that progress was slow due to the hazardous and overgrown terrain. ██████████ shows the extent of the undergrowth in the areas being searched, and helps to illustrate why Gaia was not found sooner once her clothing was discovered.
949. A further entry at 9.35am noted that the walls of the field where the clothing was found may have acted as a channel, guiding Gaia into area A12 or A13.
950. At 4.30pm, the search of the cliff top area was called off due to failing light.
951. At 6.30pm, it was reported that a Berkshire Search and Rescue Team volunteer dog had found Gaia's missing sock in area A12. The dog handler actually found the sock at approximately 3pm, but did not realise its

[REDACTED]

significance because he had not been told that Gaia had removed her clothing, or that they were searching for a sock.

952. The dog handler later criticised the operation, saying that it was the most disorganised search he had ever attended. He stated that (as well as not being told that they were looking for a sock) he was not briefed on what to do if he found Gaia, there was no mobile phone signal, and their radios were not compatible with those used by HM Coastguard, so they had no means of direct contact with Control.
953. The following day, police search teams were tasked to search area A12 once the search of A13 had been completed. Gaia was found at approximately 3.15pm.
954. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether the above evidence highlights any organisational learning or individual performance issues for Dorset Police.

> Liaison between the police and the family

> Contemporaneous evidence

955. An incident log entry at 4.40pm on 8 November 2017 states that Gaia's sister [REDACTED] would "*almost certainly*" be able to provide information that would assist in locating Gaia. The entry states that Gaia's cousin had requested that Dorset Police arrange for someone [REDACTED] to visit Gaia's sister [REDACTED].
956. As detailed elsewhere in the report, incident log entries shortly after midnight on 9 November 2017 state that Gaia's sister had suggested locations where Gaia might go to be alone, which were duly checked, with a negative result.
957. An OEL entry at 10.43am on 11 November 2017 states:
"Received DS [REDACTED] request to organise [REDACTED] with [Gaia's sister] for Monday. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Weymouth interview suite booked from 1100 hours onwards."
958. An OEL entry at 10.20am on 13 November 2017 states:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

TC⁹⁷ with [Gaia's father] – I explained the interview would be better conducted at the interview suite in Weymouth and he was happy for [sic] that. There is a time issue for today as [Gaia's sister] has a [private] appointment in Wimborne at 1500hrs and would need to leave at 1400hours. We agreed that [Gaia's father] would get [Gaia's sister] to Weymouth as soon as possible.

TC with [Gaia's cousin] – she conformed [sic] she was the NOK for [Gaia's sister] and wanted to sit in on the interview, along with a family friend [name redacted] who is a [REDACTED] lawyer and a family friend. We discussed achieving best evidence would entail [Gaia's sister] being in the interview room alone providing her own account without distractions. [Gaia's cousin] proposed [Gaia's sister] would be more able to discuss the issues with her or [the family friend] in the interview. I suggested we kept and [sic] open mind and discussed this further when [Gaia's sister] arrived. [Gaia's cousin] again requested the interview be terminated in time to meet their 3pm appointment.”

959. A subsequent entry states that Gaia's sister had been interviewed in Weymouth Interview Suite, with a family friend monitoring the interview from another room.

960. At 4.24pm on 13 November 2017, the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant sent the following email to Gaia's cousin:

“Dear [name redacted]

Following on from our team meeting this morning where we fully reviewed the case with a fresh pair of eyes there have been some recommendations made which I will summarise below.

Mobile phone number

Please can this number only be used for advice and guidance around volunteers and community related issues.

This number will only be operated between 0830 – 1530 hrs (it may not be available at other times due to operational requirements)

Sightings of Gaia

All sightings MUST be logged via 101 or 999 ONLY (please do not report on the mobile number).

Contact regarding family matters

All contact regarding family members MUST [sic] via [FLO A] ONLY.

⁹⁷ Telephone conversation.

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I hope that this helps to make communication a little clearer.

I will be in the office after 1200 tomorrow (Tues) and will be available to assist you around your volunteer briefings in Swanage at 1500 hrs. Would you like to meet before to discuss the plan? Please just let me know as I am happy to help where I can."

961. At 1.55pm on 14 November 2017, the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant informed FLO A via email that he had received the following messages from Gaia's cousin during the night:

"You swore this line would be open to me. It is not. Someone else could die tonight and you promised you'd be here for me where are you."

"When you receive this please listen to it. Mental health support is urgently needed at [Gaia's mother's] house ASAP in the morning. I spoke to man at the crisis team who paramedics agreed was very unprofessional and untrustworthy... Something terrible will happen if you don't get someone up there well before police visit tomorrow and stay throughout that visit. I beg you. Please protect our family. Please."

962. He stated:

"FYI – I did not promised [sic] any level of service with [Gaia's cousin] and made here [sic] aware at the time of providing the mobile number that this was for community related matters only and not for reporting sightings or family liason [sic]."

963. On 17 November 2017, Gaia's cousin recorded a conversation between her, Gaia's aunt and FLO A (FLO A was unaware that the conversation was being recorded). The following is an abridged summary of that conversation.

964. The recording starts with Gaia's aunt outlining her movements after Gaia went missing. FLO A asked whether she could recall stopping and talking to anyone, and she confirmed she had spoken to a woman in a layby. FLO A then questioned Gaia's aunt as to the likely time of this encounter.

965. At that point, both Gaia's cousin and Gaia's aunt indicated that they were uncomfortable with FLO A's questioning. They asked why he needed to know this information. FLO A explained that he was trying to establish whether a car seen in Dashcam footage was Gaia's aunt's car.

966. Gaia's cousin asked whether he believed it was Gaia in the footage, and FLO A replied, *"No. Not at all."* She then asked why he needed to establish whether it was Gaia's aunt's car, if *"it's just a random piece of Dashcam footage and you don't think it's significant"*. FLO A explained that, if the car did not belong to Gaia's aunt, *"it could be something a bit more significant"*.

967. Gaia's cousin said, *"Now, if you have been suggesting that that might have been ██████████'s car, it sounds like she's, this is a serious conversation that's happening right now. And that perhaps she might be eligible for legal representation?"*

968. FLO A replied that it was only a witness statement. Gaia's cousin replied that Gaia's aunt would not be providing a statement without a lawyer present, as *"that's the status of our trust in you at this stage"*.

- ████████████████████
969. They then indicated that FLO A should leave. FLO A tried to explain that Gaia's aunt was not being accused of anything, and Gaia's cousin asked whether he wanted to *"have one more go"* at explaining the significance of the footage.
970. FLO A replied, *"I was asked to come down here and see whether, because we knew ██████████ had a similar car, and to, to see whether you were able to see whether [redacted] was driving in that area looking for Gaia, like she said. And we, then we could possibly, if she was able to remember, yeah, yeah, that was myself talking to a member of the public -"*.
971. Gaia's cousin asked him why that particular piece of footage and that particular car were considered significant.
972. FLO A replied, *"If a person, i.e. ██████████, has spoken to a member of the public at that, on that point, then we will be able to eliminate that as an explanation for what has happened in that camera."*
973. Gaia's cousin asked why the police were focusing on that particular piece of footage, when there were *"mountains"* of CCTV that had not been viewed. FLO A replied that CCTV was being allocated to officers to be viewed, and that this was one particular action that had been identified.
974. Gaia's cousin clarified that FLO A had no reason to think it was Gaia in the footage, and FLO A replied that they did not know.
975. Gaia's cousin said, *"So if, if you don't think it was Gaia, then what's, was the significance of whether ██████████] stopped on the side of the street in the middle of the night and spoke to somebody? Everybody's been out driving looking for her. We've got hundreds of volunteers out driving around looking for her."*
976. FLO A replied, *"'Cause if someone stopped on that night and spoke to a person, a member of the public, then it would be nice to know that it isn't someone else stopping and speaking to Gaia."*
977. Gaia's cousin replied, *"So, the best use of your time right now is figuring out who drove a random car that you hadn't seen, and stopped and potentially talked to someone who could have been anyone?"*
978. FLO A replied, *"I think we are going round and round in circles"*, and Gaia's cousin replied, *"Yeah, alright. See you later, [FLO A]"*. The recording then ended.
- ████████ 979. Phone data supplied by Dorset Police shows that, between 10 and 21 November 2017, FLOs and FLCs made 76 calls and sent 72 text messages to members of Gaia's family.
980. Of these, 50 calls and 57 text messages (between 10 and 18 November 2017) were from FLO A.
981. Mobile phone billing information provided by Gaia's family shows that two family members ██████████ made 43 calls and sent 56 text messages to officers between 7 and 21 November 2017.
- ████████ 982. Phone data supplied by Dorset Police shows that, in addition to the calls made by the FLOs and FLCs, a total of 113 calls were made from Dorset

[REDACTED]

Police landlines to members of Gaia's family between the afternoon of 7 November 2017 and the afternoon of 20 November 2017.

> **Accounts provided by the officers who spoke to Gaia's sister in the early hours of 9 November 2017**

983. The first officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 31 July 2019. She stated that she and a colleague spoke with Gaia's sister in the early hours of 9 November 2017, in an attempt to ascertain whether she had any knowledge of Gaia's whereabouts.

984. She stated that, to the best of her recollection, neither she nor her colleague said to Gaia's sister, "*Do you know how much this is costing*". She said that she "*would not even consider using a statement like that as a tactic to gain information from someone.*"

985. The second officer stated that he did not ask Gaia's sister if she knew how much the search was costing, and did not hear the first officer say anything to this effect. He stated:

"I cannot see how referring to the cost of the policing operation in this context would have assisted the investigation. In addition, in my role as a response PC, I would not have had specific knowledge of the costs involved in the investigation."

> **Account provided by the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant**

986. In his statement dated 8 May 2019, the Purbeck Neighbourhood Sergeant stated that he acted as the main point of contact for the family before an FLO was formally appointed. He stated that the majority of his contact was with Gaia's cousin, who was in charge of the "Find Gaia" campaign.

987. He stated that he met with Gaia's cousin early on to find out more about the campaign, and to offer the support of the neighbourhood policing team.

988. He stated that he gave her his phone number in case she had any questions or needed support from the team. He stated that his phone was left on between 8.30am and 3.30pm, and he usually received 15 to 20 calls or messages a day, which were mainly requests for updates, or information that should have been reported via the 101 service.

989. He stated that he finally decided to email Gaia's cousin to remind her that she should only use that number to contact his team about specific support that they may be able to provide.

> **Account provided by the Detective Constable who interviewed Gaia's sister**

990. The Detective Constable who interviewed Gaia's sister provided a statement to the IOPC on 8 April 2019. She stated that she completed her [REDACTED] interview training in 2005, and is a trained and accredited PIP2 interviewer.
991. She stated that Gaia's sister attended for interview on 13 November 2017, accompanied by Gaia's cousin and a family friend. She stated that Gaia's cousin and the family friend explained that they would need to be present during the interview, in case Gaia's sister became distressed.
992. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] She stated that Gaia's sister also told them she was happy to be interviewed on her own.
993. She stated that it was a difficult and frustrating situation, and they had a number of "*heated discussions*" with Gaia's cousin and the family friend, but she remained professional throughout and happily stood by her decisions. She stated that she told them the interview needed to be done, that Gaia's sister was their priority and was not being helped by the delay, and that having someone else present in the room was not usual practice and could hinder Gaia's sister's answers. She stated that they eventually agreed that the family friend could be present in the downstream monitoring room with Constable I, while Gaia's cousin waited in the lounge.
994. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] She stated that her professional view was that the interview went well, and that Gaia's sister left the interview content.

> **Account provided by Constable I**

995. Constable I provided a statement to the IOPC on 8 April 2019.
996. She stated that the conversation with the family "*quickly became heated*", as Gaia's cousin and the family friend insisted on being present during the interview. She stated that this was not normal procedure [REDACTED], and it was explained to them that best evidence would be achieved without others in the room. She stated that the family friend told them she was a lawyer, and had been promised that she could be present during the interview, although she could not name the officer who had made this promise.
997. She stated that it was eventually agreed that the family friend would sit with her in the downstream monitoring room, while Gaia's cousin waited in the lounge. She stated that Gaia's sister had no problem with this arrangement, and seemed "*completely at home*" in the interview room.
998. She stated that the family friend was silent throughout the interview, and agreed afterwards that Gaia's sister had done "*really well*". She stated that, in her view, the interviewing officer established a good rapport with Gaia's sister, and it was a very straightforward interview.

> **Account provided by Family Liaison Officer (FLO) A**

- 999. FLO A provided an account to the IOPC on 14 March 2019.
- 1000. He stated that he underwent training to become an FLO in 2004, and had since been deployed as an FLO approximately thirteen times.
- 1001. He stated that he was appointed as FLO to Gaia's family at midday on 10 November 2017, although he had previously met them while assisting with the investigation. He stated that it was agreed he would provide updates to three members of Gaia's family, and he provided the family with his FLO number for contact over the weekend.
- 1002. He stated that he was on rest days on 11 and 12 November 2017, but sent and received numerous text messages and calls regarding developments in the enquiry, and further information that was required from the family. He stated that he also liaised with the Neighbourhood Policing Team and the Press Office in order to facilitate contact with Gaia's cousin, and dealt with a complaint from the family about an officer who had asked Gaia's sister if she knew how much the search was costing.
- 1003. He stated that Gaia's cousin raised concerns about how Gaia's sister would react to the news that arrests had been made. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 1004. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 1005. He stated that it was subsequently agreed that Gaia's cousin and Gaia's father would be the main two points of contact for the family.
- 1006. He stated that he spoke to Gaia's cousin by phone at 8.55pm on 15 November 2017, and they discussed the welfare of family members. He stated that the family had already used the Missing Persons helpline, and had been advised to see a GP. He stated that it was difficult for him to provide any further helplines at that time, as they were still hoping to find Gaia alive, and the majority of the support agencies he would recommend as FLO were for cases where a person had been found deceased. He stated that he emailed Gaia's father and cousin on 18 November 2017 with details for missingpeople.org.uk, the Samaritans, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and missingpersons.police.uk.
- 1007. He stated that, at 5pm on 17 November 2017, he was tasked to speak with Gaia's aunt about whether a [REDACTED] car seen in some Dashcam footage on 7 November 2017 may have been her looking for Gaia.

- ████████████████████
1008. He stated that he arranged to see her that evening, in the company of Gaia's cousin. He stated that they discussed what she could remember about her movements that evening, and her search for Gaia, and she provided him with some information.
1009. He stated that Gaia's cousin was not happy that he had not seen the Dashcam footage, and said that the car was clearly ██████, not ██████. He stated that they then became suspicious and defensive, and Gaia's cousin told him Gaia's aunt would not provide a statement without a solicitor present.
1010. He stated that Gaia's cousin then called Gaia's father, and he spoke with him by phone. He stated that Gaia's father was angry and said that a solicitor should be present, that the car was clearly dark, that FLOs should not be taking statements, and that the police were ██████ *useless*".
1011. He stated that, despite his attempts to explain the reason for the enquiry, he was unable to take a statement and the family asked him to leave.
1012. He stated that, even as an FLO, his main role was that of an investigator, and he was making the enquiry to assist the investigation. He stated that Gaia's aunt was being treated as a witness, and in his view, there was no need for her to have legal representation.
1013. He stated that it was clear at this point that his relationship with the family had broken down irreparably, and that he could not remain as their FLO.
1014. He stated:

"I have had time to reflect on this deployment as an FLO and believe that I did the best job that I could have under what were very difficult circumstances. I was professional and respectful in all of my contact with the family and tried my very best to help. When the family passed information on to me I made sure that I sent that information to the correct individuals so that if necessary it could be acted upon.

During the time that I was involved in this investigation I tried to make sure that I was available for family members to contact me and had provided them with contact numbers. I was obviously not available 24 hours a day, but I had explained at an early point in my contact with the family that there would be times when I was not available. For example, on an email to [Gaia's cousin] dated 10/11/2017 I advised my mobile would be on from 8am to 8pm and if I did not reply outside these hours the alternative number available at the time or 101 could be called. It was explained that voicemail or text messages could be left for me and that I would get back to them at the earliest opportunity. Advice to call 101 or 999 was also explained.

I have checked my Police issued mobile phone and have found that between the 10th November 2017 and 18th November 2017, I received 94 text messages from the family of Gaia and sent 45 text messages to them. Having reflected, I believe the only thing I would have done differently is that I would have restricted the main point of contact to perhaps one family nominated member at an earliest point as possible. As it was, I was updating three family members, ████████████████████ from Friday 10th November and then [Gaia's cousin] and [Gaia's father] from Tuesday 14th November, as I have previously mentioned. However, both [Gaia's cousin and father] wished to be kept updated and I was happy to do this."

████████████████████

1015. He stated that, during the time that he was involved with the investigation, he worked another 28 hours in addition to his rostered shifts, not including the work that he did on rest days.

> **Account provided by the Sergeant who instructed FLO A to obtain a witness statement from Gaia's aunt**

- █ 1016. This officer provided a statement to the IOPC on 25 October 2019.
1017. He stated that he asked FLO A to speak to Gaia's aunt about some Dashcam footage that had been released to the press, which it was suggested showed Gaia⁹⁸.
1018. He stated that on reviewing the footage, he formed the view that the car was of a similar make and model to that driven by Gaia's aunt, and he was aware that she had been driving in the area at the time. He stated that he asked FLO A to ascertain whether it could have been her in the footage.
1019. He stated that FLO A reported back that Gaia's aunt had driven that route and had spoken to a woman, but that this matter "*had caused some consternation*" for the family.

> **Account provided by Family Liaison Officer (FLO) B**

- █ 1020. FLO B provided a statement to the IOPC on 12 August 2019.
1021. He stated that he met with members of Gaia's family for the first time on 13 November 2017, at which time he introduced himself and explained that his role was to ensure continuity and help with communication when FLO A was not available.
1022. He stated that they emphasised that the police would continue searching for Gaia following the arrests, but that declaring a murder investigation would enable the police to access additional resources. He stated that the family did not seem reassured by this explanation.
1023. He stated that he, FLO A and the Deputy SIO met with the family again on 14 November 2017, and the Deputy SIO updated the family and reassured them that Dorset Police were continuing to devote substantial resources to the missing person investigation.
1024. He stated that, following the discovery of Gaia's clothing on 16 November 2017, Gaia's father was keen for Gaia's aunt to view the clothing in order to identify it as quickly as possible.
1025. He stated that he explained they had to photograph the clothing, package it carefully and exhibit it, but Gaia's father was not happy and told him to "*make it happen*". He stated that he explained in detail why the forensic recovery process meant that the family would not be able to view the clothing

⁹⁸ This footage was first published by the Daily Mirror, www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/final-footage-gaia-pope-before-11535113

[REDACTED]

immediately, but Gaia's father remained frustrated. He stated that he contacted officers at the scene, and a Crime Scene Investigator emailed him photographs of the clothing, which he then showed to Gaia's aunt for identification purposes.

1026. He stated that Gaia's father called him again on the morning of 17 November 2017 to ask about the review of bus CCTV. He stated that Gaia's father wanted them to use volunteers to review the footage, and he explained that this was not appropriate in a criminal investigation. He stated that Gaia's father later called back and told him Dorset Police had used volunteers at Wareham. He stated that he explained volunteers may have been used to watch live streaming footage for public order purposes, in which case they would have been vetted and authorised for that purpose, but Gaia's father was not happy with that explanation.
1027. He stated that Gaia's father later called him again to say that he was sitting outside the Purbeck Gazette office, and would speak to the press unless he was granted a meeting with the SIO. He stated that Gaia's father [REDACTED] would not say why he was not happy with the investigation.
1028. He stated that FLO A later told him their services were no longer required, as the family had requested two female FLOs [REDACTED].
1029. He stated that he had since reflected on the deployment, and could not identify any aspect that he believed could have been handled differently. He stated that he volunteered for the FLO role in order to help people through the worst of times, and the ending of the deployment in this case had led him to question whether he wanted to continue with the role in the future.

> Account provided by the Deputy SIO

1030. The Deputy SIO stated that Gaia's father wanted Gaia's clothing to be shown to Gaia's aunt immediately, to enable it to be positively identified.
1031. He stated that he explained that the forensic recovery of the clothing, including photography in situ, was of paramount importance. He stated that Gaia's father was not satisfied, and told him he would speak directly to the press unless prompt arrangements were made for the clothing to be viewed. He stated that they resolved the situation by showing photographs of the clothing to the family.
1032. He stated that he, the SIO and the FLC attended a meeting with the family on 17 November 2017, to update them and discuss their concerns regarding the investigation. He stated that this meeting was "cordial" but initially tense. He stated:

"My overall perception of the police relationship with the family is that it was, at best, strained. In my experience there are sometimes difficulties in forming a relationship with a bereaved family. In these circumstances where the outcome is not resolved and a person remains missing, I can understand that the high level of stress for the family would exacerbate the issues. That said,

[REDACTED]

although [Gaia's father] did on occasion express his gratitude for police actions, he [REDACTED] threatened to complain to the press if he did not receive the immediate response he expected. I know that he was dissatisfied with FLO arrangements and frequently wanted direct liaison with the SIO."

> **Account provided by Family Liaison Officer (FLO) C**

1033. FLO C provided a statement to the IOPC on 10 April 2019.
1034. She stated that she had been deployed as an FLO on numerous occasions, and had dealt with many complex families and high profile investigations.
1035. She stated that the FLC briefed her on Gaia's case at 11.45am on 18 November 2017. She stated that she was told the dynamics between FLO A and the family "*were not working*", and that FLO A could not continue as the FLO. She stated that the intention was that she and FLO D would take over as FLOs for the family.
1036. She stated that the briefing covered the investigation progress and command structure, and the makeup of Gaia's family. She stated that she was happy with what she had been told, and fully understood what was expected of her.
1037. She stated that there was no need for her to contact the family immediately following the briefing, as FLO D was maintaining contact.
1038. She stated that the SIO informed her the next morning that Gaia had been found, and that a post-mortem examination was due to take place later that morning.
1039. She stated that she spoke to Gaia's father for the first time at 9.30am, at which time she introduced herself, expressed sympathy, explained her role and informed him that there would be an update on the post mortem examination at around 5-6pm. She stated that it was agreed the police would issue a media release regarding the post mortem later that day, after sharing it with the family. She stated that she then provided the same information to Gaia's cousin.
1040. She stated that she spoke with Gaia's cousin again at 12.36pm, and again made it clear that they would discuss the post mortem findings with the family before issuing a media release. She stated that Gaia's cousin also asked her about a necklace Gaia had been wearing when she went missing.
1041. She stated that she called Gaia's father again at 12.50pm, and confirmed that the necklace in question had been found on Gaia. She stated that the media release was discussed again and Gaia's father became extremely angry, saying that he was in control of what was put out, and that there would be "*hell and fury*" if the police issued a release. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] She stated that he told her to tell the Director of Investigations what he had said.
1042. She stated that Gaia's father called again at 3.07pm seeking an update, and she told him there would be no update until 5-6pm. She stated that he then told her there would be "*consequences*" unless he received a response from

[REDACTED]

the Director of Investigations by 4pm. She stated that she reiterated what she had told him previously about the police press release, and then spoke to a staff member in the Press Office, who confirmed that they would update the Director of Investigations.

1043. She stated that the FLC updated her at 5.35pm that there was no evidence of any third-party involvement in Gaia's death, and that toxicology tests would have to be carried out. She stated that the FLC told her a press release would be issued with this information, and there would be no further updates that evening.
1044. She stated that she called Gaia's father to update him at 6.05pm, and he asked if he could see Gaia that evening. She stated that she told him it would not be possible that evening, but that she would make some enquiries the following day and let him know.
1045. She stated that they then discussed the press release, and he told her that [REDACTED] if the police released it and told her to have the Director of Investigations call him. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]". She stated that she asked him whether he wanted to know the content of the press release, and he replied that he did not, because it was not happening.
1046. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

> **Account provided by the Family Liaison Co-ordinator (FLC)**

1047. The FLC provided a statement to the IOPC on 20 May 2019.
1048. She stated that FLO B informed her on 16 November 2017 that Gaia's father was [REDACTED] demanding to see the clothing that had been found earlier that day. She stated that she understood why the family wanted to see the clothing, but it had been bagged to preserve forensic evidence, and this was explained to the family.
1049. She stated that FLO A called her on the morning of 18 November 2017, and told her that he had been "*effectively frog marched from the house*" the night before, after he tried to speak to Gaia's aunt about footage showing a vehicle that may have been hers. She stated that she agreed with FLO A that he should not have any further direct contact with the family.
1050. She stated that she and a Detective Constable met with family members after Gaia was found, and then accompanied Gaia's cousin to Gaia's sister's address [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
1051. She stated that Gaia's father was extremely unhappy that Dorset Police would be issuing the press release following the post-mortem examination,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

1052. She stated:

“I feel really sad that the family felt we hadn’t supported them but on reflection I don’t think there’s anything else we could have done. The FLO’s [sic], all of whom had more than ten years’ experience, could not have worked harder or made themselves more available. The family had my telephone number and I was never contacted to say they couldn’t get hold of [FLO B] or [FLO A].”

> **Account provided by the Gold Commander**

- 1053. In his statement dated 17 April 2019, the Gold Commander stated that he was aware the family had wanted to inform the media that Gaia had been found.
- 1054. He stated that he took into account their wishes, and their welfare, but also considered the wider risks to the public. He stated that there was a risk that some members of the public may still be searching, potentially putting themselves at risk. He stated that a large number of people had joined in the search that day, and were planning to continue searching the following day.
- 1055. He stated that, having considered these conflicting priorities, they informed the family that the police would delay issuing their own press release until 8pm, which the family accepted.
- 1056. He stated that the force media team informed him on 19 November 2017 that Gaia’s father had made it clear he did not want the police to issue any further press releases.
- 1057. He stated that he was mindful that it was an extremely difficult time for the family, and he respected their feelings; however, there was a great deal of speculation in the press and in social media regarding the circumstances of Gaia’s death, and the possibility of third party involvement. He stated that the police press release was intended to reassure the public that the police did not believe there was a murderer living in the community, and hopefully to reduce the media interest, with a view to providing the family with some respite from the press.
- 1058. He stated that, as Gaia’s father was grieving, he may not have been in the right frame of mind to handle the press, and as he was not in possession of all the facts, there was a risk that he could disclose inaccurate information that might jeopardise the investigation.
- 1059. He stated that, while he had great respect for the family’s wishes, he considered it necessary to adopt the “*tried and tested*” practice of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] issuing accurate information with a view to limiting speculation.

> **Account provided by the Police Search Co-ordinator (PoISC)**

- 1060. In his statement dated 6 March 2019, the PoISC stated that he was told the family wanted to visit the scene where Gaia was found.
- 1061. He stated that he had already visited the scene with the officer who found Gaia, in order to ascertain the GPS co-ordinates for the Coroner. He stated that he agreed to show a family representative the exact position so that they could lay flowers. He stated that the scene was on quite steep, slippery and hazardous ground, so he identified a large limestone block with a rowan tree less than twenty metres from the scene.
- 1062. He stated that, on the day in question, he met with a member of Gaia's family. He stated that the family member was clearly distressed, and he checked with him that he was happy to continue to the scene.
- 1063. He stated that they drove to the scene, and the family member commented on the distance from town and observed that it must have been difficult to search. He stated that the family member asked why NPAS had not found Gaia, and he briefly explained about thermal imaging and issues with penetrating thick vegetation. He stated that when they reached the end of the track, they made their way on foot through the gate and down into area A12, and the family member remarked again on the difficult ground and the vegetation.
- 1064. He stated that he took the family member to the point on the track opposite the rowan tree, and pointed down the slope to the area where Gaia was found. He stated that he did not take the family member to the exact location, as the ground was steep and damp and he did not want to put either of them at risk.
- 1065. He stated that the family member called him about a week later in an agitated state, and accused him of lying about the location. He stated that the family member told him he had returned to the area and found marks from what he believed to be a CSI tent, much lower down and on open ground. He stated that he explained to the family member that he had shown him the location that the finding officer had indicated, and that he was confident, having seen the CSI images, that this was the exact location.
- 1066. He stated that the family member continued to accuse him of lying, and after trying repeatedly to explain and to apologise for any misunderstanding, he ended the call to prevent any further escalation or confusion.
- 1067. He stated that he had provided the location exactly as he knew it to be, based on all the information available to him, including the crime scene photographs, in an effort to alleviate the family's distress and allow them a place to lay flowers and mourn Gaia.

> **Analysis of the evidence**

- 1068. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] They alleged that, when questioning Gaia's sister about Gaia's whereabouts, an

[REDACTED]

officer asked her whether she knew “*how much money [the search] was costing*”.

- 1069. They complained that FLO A did not assist with arranging mental health support for them, and was often unreachable by phone. They further alleged that he inappropriately attended Gaia’s aunt’s home on the evening of 17 November 2017, questioned her about footage that had been released to the media, encouraged her to write and sign a statement about her movements on the day Gaia went missing, and discouraged her from obtaining legal advice.
- 1070. They stated that, when Gaia’s clothes were found, the police initially refused to allow Gaia’s aunt to view and positively identify them.
- 1071. Finally, the family alleged that Dorset Police failed to provide accurate information to the family, particularly in relation to Gaia’s final resting place, which caused them significant distress.
- 1072. In the absence of further details, it has not been possible to identify the officer who allegedly asked Gaia’s sister whether she knew how much the search was costing. The officers who spoke to Gaia’s sister denied saying anything to this effect.
- 1073. [REDACTED]
- 1074. [REDACTED] An entry on the morning of 13 November 2017 states that Gaia’s cousin had requested that she and the family friend be allowed to sit in on the interview, and had been told that she could discuss the matter further when she and Gaia’s sister arrived.
- 1075. The officer who interviewed Gaia’s sister stated that she said she was happy to be interviewed on her own. [REDACTED]. She stated that, following some discussion, it was agreed that the family friend would be present in the downstream monitoring room. [REDACTED]. She stated that her professional view was that the interview went well, and that Gaia’s sister left the interview content.
- 1076. Constable I stated that, in her view, the interviewing officer established a good rapport with Gaia’s sister, and that it was a very straightforward interview.

- ██████████
1077. Both officers stated that it was not usual practice to have a ██████ person present in circumstances such as these, and that having someone else present in the room may have hindered the interview.
1078. FLO A was appointed as FLO to the family on 10 November 2017. He stated that he tried his best to be available to the family, but that he explained he would obviously not be contactable 24 hours a day. He stated that he gave them advice on who to contact at times when he was unavailable.
1079. He stated that, between 10 and 14 November 2017, he was providing updates to three family members, and from 14 November onwards he was providing updates to two family members. He stated that, with hindsight, it would have been better to restrict contact to one family member, but at the time he was happy to comply with the family's wishes. He stated that during his deployment, he worked another 28 hours in addition to his rostered shifts, not including work that he did on rest days.
1080. Phone data shows that, between 10 and 21 November 2017, FLOs and FLCs made 76 calls and sent 72 text messages to members of Gaia's family. Of these, 50 calls and 57 text messages were from FLO A, between 10 and 18 November 2017.
1081. FLO A stated that on 17 November 2017, he was tasked to speak with Gaia's aunt about whether a ██████ car seen in some Dashcam footage on 7 November 2017 may have been hers, when she was out looking for Gaia. He stated that Gaia's cousin was not happy that he had not seen the Dashcam footage, and told him that Gaia's aunt would not provide a statement without a solicitor present. He stated that, despite his attempts to explain the reason for the enquiry, he was unable to take a statement and the family asked him to leave.
1082. He stated that, even as an FLO, his main role was that of an investigator, and he was making the enquiry to assist the investigation. He stated that Gaia's aunt was a witness, and in his view, there was no need for her to have legal representation.
1083. It is apparent from the recording of this conversation that it was a fraught situation for all concerned. The recording shows that FLO A began taking a witness statement from Gaia's aunt regarding her movements on 7 November 2017, which is something that would have fallen within his remit as FLO, according to the FLO guidance. However, Gaia's aunt and Gaia's cousin made it clear that they had lost confidence in Dorset Police, and that Gaia's aunt would not be providing a statement without legal representation.
1084. They also queried why FLO A was focusing on this particular piece of footage if he could not be sure that it showed Gaia, given that a large volume of footage had not yet been viewed. FLO A explained that CCTV was being allocated to officers to be viewed, and that this was one particular action that had been identified. He explained that he was hoping to eliminate this particular piece of footage from the enquiry, by ascertaining that it showed Gaia's aunt speaking to a member of the public, rather than an unidentified

[REDACTED]

person speaking to Gaia. Gaia's cousin remained dissatisfied with this explanation, and it was agreed that it would be best if FLO A left.

1085. FLO A stated that it was difficult for him to provide details of support organisations to the family, as they were still hoping to find Gaia alive, and the majority of the support agencies he would recommend were for cases where a person had been found deceased. He stated that the family had already used the Missing Persons helpline, and had been advised to see a GP. [REDACTED]
1086. The FLO guidance indicates that FLOs are only expected to signpost families to support organisations; they are not expected to make arrangements for families to receive mental health support.
1087. Appendices 6 and 7 of the FLO guidance list various support organisations, most of which are not necessarily relevant to a missing person enquiry. Appendix 6 states:
- “If families are reluctant or unwilling to accept offers of help from [these] organisations... FLOs should be proactive in seeking out and establishing alternative support for families. There are other statutory and voluntary organisations, community interest and religious groups that will be able to offer practical support, help and, in some cases, counselling services. FLOs should share this information with the families and assist the family to make contact with such organisations if they so desire.”*
1088. The APP also lists charities that can provide families with advice and support, including Missing People, the Lucie Blackman Trust, the Samaritans and Mind.
1089. FLO A stated that he emailed Gaia's father and Gaia's cousin on 18 November 2017 with details for missingpeople.org.uk, the Samaritans, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and missingpersons.police.uk. It is not clear from the evidence what support organisations he signposted prior to this.
1090. FLO B (who replaced FLO A) stated that, following the discovery of Gaia's clothing, Gaia's father was keen for Gaia's aunt to view the clothing in order to identify it as quickly as possible. He stated that he explained they had to photograph the clothing, package it carefully and exhibit it, and explained in detail why the forensic recovery process meant that the family would not be able to view the clothing immediately, but Gaia's father remained frustrated. He stated that he contacted officers at the scene, and a Crime Scene Investigator emailed him photographs of the clothing, which he then showed to Gaia's aunt for identification purposes.
1091. The Deputy SIO stated that Gaia's father wanted Gaia's clothing to be shown to Gaia's aunt immediately, and he explained that the forensic recovery of the clothing, including photography in situ, was of paramount importance. He stated that Gaia's father was not satisfied, and told him he would speak directly to the press unless prompt arrangements were made for the clothing

[REDACTED]

to be viewed. He stated that they resolved the situation by showing photographs of the clothing to the family.

1092. In relation to Gaia's final resting place, the PoISC stated that he agreed to show a family member the exact position so that the family could lay flowers. He stated that the scene was on quite steep, slippery and hazardous ground, so he identified a large limestone block with a rowan tree less than twenty metres from the scene. He stated that he took the family member to the point on the track opposite the rowan tree, and pointed down the slope to the area where Gaia was found. He stated that he did not take the family member to the exact location, as the ground was steep and damp.
1093. He stated that the family member called him about a week later and told him he had returned to the area and found marks from what he believed to be a CSI tent, much lower down and on open ground. He stated that he told the family member he was confident he had shown him the exact location, but the family member continued to accuse him of lying, and after trying repeatedly to explain and to apologise for any misunderstanding, he ended the call to prevent further escalation or confusion.
1094. The member of Gaia's family and the PoISC undoubtedly have their own differing recollections of this conversation. In the absence of any independently verifiable record, it is not possible to say how the misunderstanding arose. [REDACTED]
1095. It will fall to the decision maker to consider whether the evidence highlights any failings in the communication between Dorset Police and Gaia's family.

> Learning identified during the IOPC investigation

> Early learning recommendations by the IOPC

1096. On 13 November 2018, the IOPC made the following organisational learning recommendations to Dorset Police:
- Dorset Police should review their Missing Person Risk Assessment training to ensure consistency and quality of decision-making and recorded rationales, appropriate reviews of decisions made (together with recording of the same) and robust understanding of both local and national guidance.
 - If not already in place, Memorandums of Understanding should be formulated between relevant partner agencies and stakeholders, such as the police, DorSAR, and HM Coastguard, to ensure all parties have clear understanding of roles, responsibilities and the procedure for

callouts. These should be included in any missing person risk assessment training and incorporated in force policy and procedure.

- The Dorset Police Missing Person policy and procedure should be reviewed immediately. This review should involve engagement with appropriate subject matter experts. Attention must be given to any inconsistencies and contradictions within the policy. Following the review, the policy should be disseminated to all relevant personnel, to ensure understanding and compliance. All documentation should be consistently protectively marked.
- Dorset Police should review their training provision, policy and procedure in relation to the missing person briefing process; record keeping (decisions; resources, key information; search scope, progress and outcomes); deployment of LPSMs and early engagement of PoISAs.
- Dorset Police Missing Person policy and procedure should be reviewed to ensure a clear distinction is drawn between mandatory and discretionary elements of the same.

> **Account provided by the Police Search Co-ordinator (PoISC)**

- 1097. In his statement dated 6 March 2019, the PoISC stated that, following the search for Gaia, Dorset Police reviewed their joint operation policies and procedures with outside agencies.
- 1098. He stated that, as a direct result of the case, Dorset Police held a large-scale training exercise involving HM Coastguard, DorSAR, NPAS, DWFRS, the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) Air Ambulance, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Wessex 4x4 Response, and the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network (RAYNET). He stated that this was the first time these agencies had all come together in such an exercise, and it proved very helpful.
- 1099. He stated that Dorset Police has a regional service level agreement with all the emergency services, which includes training with them in order to improve their responses to missing persons.
- 1100. He stated that Dorset Police is also progressing a local policy, procedure and training system with DWFRS, so that when a person goes missing they can request assistance from local Fire and Rescue personnel in the initial search. He stated that, again, this had come about as a direct result of the search for Gaia.

> **Account provided by the officer who acted as Gold Commander during the missing person investigation**

- 1101. In his statement dated 17 April 2019, this officer stated that Dorset Police had already undertaken a number of detailed reviews. He stated that he had asked the Director of Investigations to discuss a review with the teams under

his supervision, to identify any obvious learning. He stated that he had also asked the Detective Superintendent in charge of Public Protection to liaise with the appropriate safeguarding board to ensure that a partnership approach was taken to any learning, and to request a Safeguarding Adult Review if appropriate.

> Confirmation of learning implemented by Dorset Police

1102. On 2 August 2019, the officer who acted as Gold Commander during the missing person investigation provided an update on the learning that had been implemented thus far.
1103. He stated that Dorset Police had delivered Missing Persons Decision-Maker training to 147 officers and staff between May and July 2019, and were arranging catch-up sessions for those who were unable to attend.
1104. He stated that they were also due to deliver a four-hour bespoke training course to the wider workforce between September and November 2019, covering primary investigation standards, OIC responsibilities, risk categories and assessment, search considerations and Digital Media Investigation (DMI) opportunities.
1105. He stated that the training had received good feedback; however, they recognised the need to embed missing person refresher training within initial officer training, training following promotion and specialist training, to ensure role/rank related Continuing Professional Development. He stated that this had been raised as a formal action at the Operational Delivery Board on 10 July 2019, where it was agreed that this would be progressed and monitored by the Learning and Development team.
1106. He stated that Dorset Police has a South Western Regional Collaborative Agreement (RCA) with DWFRS and SWAST, and is progressing a Local Collaborative Agreement (LCA) on the use of Firefighters to assist with IVCs in missing person searches, with delivery anticipated in 2020.
1107. He stated that Dorset Police is also exploring the possibility of a local agreement with HM Coastguard [REDACTED].
1108. He confirmed that Dorset Police has a Service Level Agreement with DorSAR covering call-outs and expectations during a search, among other areas.
1109. He confirmed that the Dorset Police Missing Person policy had been reviewed, and that staff had been reminded of their responsibilities. He stated that a mature draft of the policy had been produced by a cross-command working group, and this draft would undergo a formal consultation process prior to approval by the Chief Officer. He stated that they expected to be ready to publish an approved version of the policy by the end of September 2019.
1110. He stated that Dorset Police recognised the need to conduct a more extensive review, to ensure that the correct governance structures are in place. He stated that, in the meantime, new structures within Territorial Policing ensured close scrutiny of missing person investigations, with cases

being escalated through a Gold, Silver and Bronze arrangement where appropriate.

1111. He stated that Dorset Police also now has a dedicated chair responsible for daily taskings, with dedicated resilience to ensure consistency in approach and ownership.

> Learning implemented by HM Coastguard

1112. The Area Commander and National Search Lead for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has confirmed that, effective from autumn 2019, officers from the MCA will undergo PoISA training alongside the police, and newly qualified Coastguard Search Advisors will return for re-validation every five years and attend the third week of the PoISA course, during which they will deliver a bespoke HM Coastguard presentation to police delegates.

> Next steps

1113. The decision maker will now set out her views on the investigation findings in a separate opinion document. She will also decide whether any organisational learning has been identified that should be shared with the organisation in question.

> Criminal offences

1114. On receipt of my report, the decision maker must decide if there is an indication that a criminal offence may have been committed by any person to whose conduct the investigation related. If she decides that there is such an indication, she must decide whether it is appropriate to refer the matter to the CPS.
1115. I have not identified any criminal offences for the decision maker to consider.

> Summary for publication

1116. The following summaries are of the incident and our investigation. If the decision is made to publish the case on the IOPC website, this text will be used for that purpose. This text is included in the investigation report so that the Appropriate Authority can provide their representations regarding redactions.

Section of summary	Text
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<p>Summary of incident</p>	<p>A 19-year-old woman in Dorset who suffered from epilepsy and mental health issues was reported missing by her family on 7 November 2017.</p> <p>The woman's mother initially reported her missing to Surrey Police, who emailed the information to Dorset Police at 4.57pm.</p> <p>Dorset Police created a missing person report at 6.18pm, after the woman's aunt contacted them directly to report the woman missing.</p> <p>The woman was initially assessed as medium risk, but the assessment was upgraded to high risk in the early hours of the following morning.</p> <p>In the days that followed, Dorset Police explored a number of different lines of enquiry as part of the search. Devon and Cornwall Police, Dorset Search and Rescue (DorSAR), Hampshire and Berkshire Search and Rescue, HM Coastguard, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWRFS) and members of the public also assisted with the search.</p> <p>On 13 and 16 November 2017, officers arrested three people on suspicion of murder.</p> <p>On the morning of 16 November 2017, the woman's clothing was found discarded on a cliff top near Blacker's Hole. Dorset Police subsequently concentrated their search in this area, and on 18 November 2017, the woman was found deceased in an area of dense undergrowth approximately 300 metres from her discarded clothing. There were no injuries to suggest third-party involvement, and a post-mortem examination found that she had died from hypothermia.</p>
<p>Summary of investigation</p>	<p>IOPC investigators reviewed contemporaneous records of the police search, obtained and reviewed logs of calls to the police, and reviewed relevant policies and procedures. IOPC investigators obtained accounts from over 100 witnesses. The IOPC also asked the College of Policing to review the police search.</p>

Gaia Pope-Sutherland

Investigation into a missing person enquiry by
Dorset Police

- > Independent investigation report
- > Appendices

> Appendix 1: The role of the IOPC

The IOPC carries out its own independent investigations into complaints and incidents involving the police, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the National Crime Agency (NCA) and Home Office immigration and enforcement staff.

We are completely independent of the police and the government. All cases are overseen by the Director General (DG), who has the power to delegate their decisions to other members of staff in the organisation. These individuals are referred to as DG delegates, or decision makers, and they provide strategic direction and scrutinise the investigation.

> The investigation

At the outset of an investigation, a lead investigator will be appointed, who will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the investigation on behalf of the DG. This may involve taking witness statements, interviewing subjects to the investigation, analysing CCTV footage, reviewing documents, obtaining forensic and other expert evidence, as well as liaison with the coroner, the CPS and other agencies.

They are supported by a team, including other investigators, lawyers, press officers and other specialist staff.

Throughout the investigation, meaningful updates are provided to interested persons and may be provided to other stakeholders at regular intervals. Each investigation also passes through a series of reviews and quality checks.

The IOPC investigator often makes early contact with the CPS and is sometimes provided with investigative advice during the course of the investigation. However, any such advice will usually be considered to be confidential.

> Complaint matters

An investigation into a complaint is not automatically an investigation into whether a person serving with the police has a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct. It will investigate the issues raised in an individual's complaint.

An investigation may become subject to special requirements (see more below) if the IOPC lead investigator considers that there is an indication that a person to whose conduct the investigation relates may have:

- a) committed a criminal offence, or
- b) behaved in a manner that would justify them facing disciplinary proceedings

> Complaints that are subject to special requirements

The complaints subject to special requirements focus on the actions of the identified officers to enable conclusions to be drawn about whether there is a case to answer in respect to the actions of an individual serving with the police. Individuals subject to the investigation will have been formally served a notice explaining the conduct under investigation and setting out their rights. The conclusions drawn cannot be about whether the complaint is upheld or not, but instead are about whether the subject has a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct, or whether the performance of any person was unsatisfactory.

> Complaints not subject to special requirements

For complaints not subject to special requirements, the IOPC decision maker may reach an opinion about whether the performance of anybody who was the focus of the complaint was unsatisfactory, if applicable. Because the complaint was not subject to special requirements, these individuals will not have been served with a formal notice, as was the case for complaints subject to special requirements.

Some complaints will be about the standard of service provided by the police, rather than a person's actions. In such cases, special requirements will not be relevant, but a decision will still be made regarding whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld. To uphold a complaint, the decision maker must conclude that the force did not deliver the service standard that a reasonable person could expect.

> Investigation reports

Once the investigator has gathered the evidence, they must prepare a report. The report must summarise and analyse the evidence, and refer to or attach any relevant documents.

The report must then be given to the decision maker, who will decide if a criminal offence may have been committed by any of the subjects of the investigation, and whether it is appropriate to refer the case to the CPS for a charging decision.

The decision maker will also reach an opinion about whether any person to whose conduct the investigation related has a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct, or no case to answer, and may record their view on whether any such person's performance was unsatisfactory. The decision maker will also decide whether to make individual or wider learning recommendations for the police.

> Misconduct proceedings

The report and decision maker's opinion must be given to the appropriate authority (normally the police force) responsible for the individual(s) to whose conduct the

████████████████████

investigation related. The appropriate authority must then inform the decision maker whether any person to whose conduct the investigation related has a case to answer for misconduct or gross misconduct, or no case to answer, or whether any such person's performance was unsatisfactory, and what action they propose to take, if any. The decision maker must consider whether the appropriate authority's response is appropriate, and has powers to recommend or ultimately direct it to bring misconduct proceedings or unsatisfactory performance procedures (UPP).

Unsatisfactory performance will be dealt with through the police force's UPP. UPP is generally handled by the person's line manager and is intended to improve the performance of both the individual and police force.

> **Criminal proceedings**

If there is an indication that a criminal offence may have been committed by any person to whose conduct the investigation related, the IOPC may refer that person to the CPS. The CPS will then decide whether to bring a prosecution against any person. If they decide to prosecute, and there is a not guilty plea, there may be a trial. Relevant witnesses identified during our investigation may be asked to attend the court. The criminal proceedings will determine whether the defendant is guilty beyond reasonable doubt.

> **Inquests**

Following investigations into deaths, the IOPC's investigation report and supporting documents are usually provided to the coroner. The coroner may then hold an inquest, either alone or with a jury. This hearing is unlike a trial. It is a fact-finding forum and will not determine criminal or civil liability. A coroner might ask a selection of witnesses to give evidence at the inquest. At the end of the inquest, the coroner and/or jury will decide how they think the death occurred based on the evidence they have heard and seen.

> **Publishing the report**

After all criminal proceedings relating to the investigation have concluded, and at a time when the IOPC is satisfied that any other misconduct or inquest proceedings will not be prejudiced by publication, the IOPC may publish its investigation report, or a summary of this.

Redactions might be made to the report at this stage to ensure, for example, that individuals' personal data is sufficiently protected.

> Appendix 3: Glossary

Acronyms and terms used in the report

A12	A map of the coastal area was divided into grids to assist with managing the search [REDACTED] Gaia was found in the area marked A12.
ABD	Acute Behavioural Disturbance (ABD) is an umbrella term for a range of conditions that can give rise to similar symptoms, including delirium, aggression and hyperthermia (overheating).
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Bronze	A Bronze Commander controls resources at the scene of an incident.
C6	An early map of Swanage and the surrounding coastline was marked with areas searched by HM Coastguard [REDACTED] Gaia was found in area C6.
Critical incident	A critical incident is defined as any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.
Critical Incident Inspector	The Critical Incident Inspector supervises major and critical incidents, including missing person investigations.
CSI	Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) gather physical and forensic evidence at a scene.
College of Policing APP	The College of Policing is the professional body for those working in policing. The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) is a comprehensive body of online guidance on policing.
Delta or D2	Another term for the Critical Incident Inspector.
DorSAR	Dorset Search and Rescue (DorSAR) is a team of highly trained volunteers who work with the police, HM Coastguard and other emergency services.
DWRFS	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service.
EPT	The Enhanced Policing Team (EPT) is a specialist policing team that engages in higher risk activities, including executing search warrants,

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assisting investigations into organised crime and conducting high-risk searches.

- FIB24** The Force Intelligence Bureau, formerly known as the Risk Management Unit (RMU, see below).
- FIC** A Force Incident Commander (FIC) in Dorset is a Chief Inspector who has overall responsibility for resourcing across the county. In a high-risk missing person investigation, the FIC will examine the initial lines of enquiry and allocate appropriate resources.
- FLC** A Family Liaison Coordinator (FLC) will coordinate FLOs, draft strategies and risk assessments for the deployment of FLOs, liaise with the SIO, help to represent the family within the investigation, and monitor the welfare of the FLOs.
- FLO** Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) are specially trained police officers who work with the families of people who have been affected by a serious crime or incident. The FLO is responsible for gathering evidence from the family, and helping to arrange care and support for them.
- Gold** The Gold Commander is in overall control of resources at an incident, and is responsible for managing the incident at a strategic level.
- Grampian Statistics** “Missing Persons: Understanding, Planning and Responding”, often referred to as the Grampian Statistics, was produced by Inspector Graham Gibb and Dr Penny Woolnough in 2007. Their study analysed over 3000 missing person investigations and 2000 suicides across the UK, and found that missing people in specific age brackets or with certain mental health issues engaged in similar types of behaviour. The police use these findings to profile missing persons and identify where to focus a search.
- H2H** House to house enquiries.
- HA** Home address.
- HMCG** Her Majesty’s Coastguard.
- iFIND** iFIND was developed by the NCA UK Missing Persons Unit, who sought to replicate the Grampian Statistics using a broader and more recent dataset. iFIND provides statistical analyses of location information for different categories of missing persons, and should be utilised in conjunction with the Grampian Statistics.
- iTask** iTask alerts patrol officers to look out for suspects, victims, missing persons, or other persons of interest.
- IVCs** Initial Visual Checks.

LKP	Last Known Position. The location where the missing person was last known to have been, as established from clues at the location such as property, clothing or tracks.
LPSM	A Lost Person Search Manager (LPSM) co-ordinates resources and tactics in searches for high-risk missing people, either independently or alongside a PoISA.
LSO	A Licensed Search Officer (LSO) is an officer who has been trained in how to conduct searches.
MCA	The Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The MCA is an executive agency whose responsibilities include working to prevent the loss of lives at sea, implementing maritime law, and coordinating search and rescue operations along the coastline and at sea via HM Coastguard.
MCIT	Major Crime Investigation Team.
Message	Another term for an incident log.
Misper	A police abbreviation for a missing person.
MPB	The Missing Persons Bureau (MPB) is part of the NCA, and works with the police and related organisations to improve services to missing person investigations. The MPB holds a database of missing persons, unidentified bodies, remains and people found in the UK. It also manages the forensic databases associated with missing and unidentified investigations, undertakes desk-based enquiries on behalf of forces, and provides investigative advice and support on a case-by-case basis.
MOP	Member(s) of the Public.
NCA	The National Crime Agency (NCA) deals with serious and organised crime, fraud, cyber crime, and sexual abuse and exploitation of children and young people.
NDM	The National Decision Model (NDM). Further information about the NDM is provided in the Policies and Procedures section.
NOK	Next of Kin.
NPAS	The National Police Air Service (NPAS) provides air support to police forces in England and Wales.
OEL	An Occurrence Enquiry Log (OEL) is used to record police actions and decisions during an incident.
OIC	Officer in Charge or Officer in the Case. An officer with responsibility for a particular investigation.
PACE	The Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 provides a legislative framework for the powers of police officers in England and

[REDACTED]

Wales. Among other things, it governs the police powers of arrest, detention, questioning, entry and search of premises, and stop and search.

- PCSO** Police Community Support Officer.
- PLS** Place Last Seen. The last confirmed location where the missing person was seen.
- POD** The Probability of Detection (POD) is a measure of the likelihood of detecting the missing person in a given area with a given search technique. For example, a fingertip search would have a much higher POD than an aerial search. For a route and track search, a wider sweep width would result in a higher POD.
- Policy log** A policy log is used to record key decisions and rationales during major incidents.
- PoISA** A Police Search Adviser (PoISA) is trained to plan and manage search activity and should be consulted whenever advice is needed, particularly in complex cases and major enquiries.
- PoISC** In high-profile and complex cases that require numerous searches, more than one PoISA may be required. A Police Search Co-ordinator (PoISC) will co-ordinate and manage the PoISAs.
- PST** Police Search Team.
- RMU** The Risk Management Unit (RMU, now known as FIB24) is based in the Dorset Police Control Room. Their role is to research intelligence relating to incidents and individuals.
- RTC** Road Traffic Collision.
- Silver** The Silver Commander is responsible for the tactical implementation of strategic directions issued by the Gold Commander.
- SIO** Senior Investigating Officer.
- SPOC** "Single Point of Contact" (SPOC) can refer either to the analysis of mobile phone data, or to someone who acts as an intermediary between two parties (e.g. the police and a family).
- SPVN** An abbreviation for Supervision.
- Sweep width** The distance searched on either side of a path during a route and track search.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



- Top table** In Dorset Police Control Room, the FIC, the Deployment Manager and the DS in charge of the RMU sit in an area known as the “top table”.
- Victim recovery dog** Victim recovery dogs are trained to find human remains.

