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Response to IPCC report on investigation into death of Lee Balkwell

Essex Police has responded to the publication of a report by the Independent Police Complaints Commission into the death of Lee Balkwell.

Lee Balkwell was found dead at a farm near South Ockendon on July 18, 2002.

Essex Police received a copy of the IPCC report in December 2011.

It is clear that there were failings during the course of the investigation and subsequent reviews. Deputy Chief Constable Derek Benson has sent a letter of apology to Lee's father Les Balkwell and Lee's partner Lorraine Mitchinson for the failings.

Les Balkwell made over 130 complaints to the IPCC against Essex Police, of which 92 were investigated. The IPCC upheld in full 11 of the complaints, partially upheld eight and the remainder were not upheld. Predominantly they involve officers' actions and decision making during the initial investigation in 2002.

Three Essex officers, currently working for the force, will be subject to a formal debrief with Essex Police's Deputy Chief Constable.

In the last nine years since Lee Balkwell's death, Essex Police's structure and approach to investigating homicide and unnatural death has changed. The Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate has been formed and the identification, training, mentoring, accreditation and support of Senior Investigating Officers in line with national best practise has been adopted.

Meanwhile, the criminal investigation into Lee Balkwell's death continues under the leadership of Det Chief Supt Lee Catling of the Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate. This investigation will be overseen by Assistant Chief Constable Gary Beautridge, Head of SCD.

We would like to take this opportunity to encourage anyone who still holds information relating to Lee's death to come forward now and share that information in confidence by calling the incident room on 01634 884032 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

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