

# Former Surrey teacher avoids ban from profession

31 July 2025



A former science teacher and head of year at a Surrey private school has avoided a ban from the profession despite sending ‘sexually explicit’ messages to three colleagues.

Leishan Silva, 44, was sacked from Downsend School in Leatherhead following an internal investigation into complaints by three female staff about inappropriate and persistent behaviour.

He later admitted to the allegations during a private misconduct hearing held by the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) on July 11.

Messages sent by Mr Silva were categorised as “sexually motivated” by the TRA. He sent one colleague messages like “f\*\*\* me, you look amazing”, “what’s wrong with c\*\*, it’s natural?” and “your amazing boobs”. He also suggested he would like to see one of them wear a bikini on a school trip to a water park.

Between 2018-2023, Mr Silva pursued sexual conversations with three colleagues. The social media messages displayed what the TRA panel called “a pattern of behaviour over a sustained period”.

Despite finding Mr Silva’s actions amounted to “unacceptable professional conduct and conduct that may bring the profession into disrepute”, the panel stopped short of recommending he should be banned from teaching.

Instead, they opted to publish the findings as a warning on the government’s website.

Also noted by the panel was Mr Silva’s “unblemished” disciplinary record and successful teaching career prior to the allegations. The panel said there was no evidence these concerns were brought to Mr Silva’s attention at an earlier stage.

His attention was drawn to these concerns retrospectively, so his poor conduct could not have been addressed earlier.

When the allegations were made by the three staff members, Downsend School launched an internal investigation, leading to a disciplinary hearing which resulted in Mr Silva being sacked from the school.

In mitigation, the panel noted Mr Silva had expressed remorse and insight regarding the harm and embarrassment he has caused to his female colleagues. He had also written apology letters to each of the colleagues. Mr Silva had told the panel that difficult personal circumstances at the time may have affected his judgment.

In isolation, the interactions with a colleague could be categorised as a ‘low level concern’ according to the TRA panel. But taken together, the panel said the messages showed a pattern of behaviour over a sustained period of time.

The report said: “Therefore, the cumulative effect of this repeated behaviour led to the panel’s determination that Mr Silva’s case amounted to unacceptable professional conduct.”

Concluding, the secretary of state said: “The publication of the findings made would be sufficient to send an appropriate message to the teacher as to the standards of behaviour that were not acceptable and that the publication would meet the public interest requirement of declaring proper standards of the profession.”

Stock image of empty classroom. (Credit: kieurop/ Pixabay)

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## £4.9 million not enough to solve Surrey’s SEND problems?

31 July 2025



A £4.9m overhaul of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) services in Surrey has been approved. But opposition members have claimed the investment won’t fix the system’s deep-rooted problems. The funding was signed off by ruling cabinet members for Surrey County Council at a meeting on July 22, as part of the council’s ongoing budget planning for next year (2026/27). But extra resources and staff “will not by themselves make the significant change the service needs”, according to opposing councillors.

Changes to the SEND service have been recommended as a result of the End-to-End review of the statutory service, council documents state. These include hiring 30 new permanent case officers, forming a new team dedicated to issuing Education, Health Care Plans (EHCPs), and reducing case load from over 200 to 150 per officer. Council documents detail there would also be two new operational groups formed – one focused on staffing, training and system development, while another group will focus solely on tribunals, mediations, dispute resolution, complaints and quality assurance.

But Cllr Fiona Davidson, the committee chair who oversees and scrutinises SEND services, flagged serious concerns to cabinet members. She said the committee “has already found that employing extra staff does not by itself result in the outcomes we so desperately need.” The member for Guildford Residents and Villages slammed the proposal and argued the funding does not describe specific, measurable outcomes or impacts: “How will we know we have made progress?” She said: “[The committee has] deep concerns that this additional funding will once again not deliver the services that the children with SEND, their parents and carers have a right to expect, and all Surrey residents should demand.”

Cllr Davidson said an injection of £15m into SEND services in July 2023 was promised to enable many process improvements in communications, IT changes and strengthen governance. “Was this £15m value for money?” she asked cabinet members. She said: “To make matters worse, many of the backlog EHCPs which the £15m funded turned out not to be fit for purpose. These backlog EHCPs have contributed to the rising number of appeals by parents to the SEND tribunal. The human cost of these poor EHCPs have been extremely depressing [...] Children not in school for months and years, families wrung out by trying to get support, schools at the end of their ability to cope trying to get very specialist support for their students. So we wondered, was that £15m value for money?” Although she agreed the investment has delivered significant EHCP timeliness, she said it is not clear that it has achieved much else promised two years ago.

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, defended the new plans, insisting the focus would be on prevention, early intervention and supporting families more effectively. He said: “It’s absolutely wrong that families feel pushed down that route to find the solution that is right for their child. This cabinet is very focused on spending every pound or penny of public money effectively.”

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New Surrey County Council HQ, Woodhatch Place on Cockshot Hill, Reigate. Credit Surrey County Council

## Surrey County Council claim funding review “unfair”.

31 July 2025



A Surrey County Council could be pushed to the brink of financial crisis if government reforms, aimed at evening out local authority funding, go ahead, its leader has warned. Cllr **Tim Oliver** (Conservative) said Surrey County Council could be heading towards a “cliff edge” under proposals which could dramatically reduce Surrey’s income. The central government is looking at scrapping the current council tax funding model in favour of a national 100 per cent ‘equaliser’ system where each local authority gets the same amount of funding. The Conservative leader’s warning came during a cabinet meeting on July 22, where he suggested the government’s ‘Fair Funding Review’ would hit Surrey harder than most councils due to its higher council tax base.

The central government has launched a review into how local councils are funded across the country, called the fair funding review. Reports suggest the government could go ahead with a 100 per cent “equaliser” for local government income, meaning every council essentially gets the same level of council tax income. “There will be at some point a cliff edge for this council,” the Conservative leader warned colleagues. “There is an expectation we will look to our residents to fill that gap. That gap won’t be filled – can’t be filled – even if we were to increase council tax by 5 per cent.” Currently, Surrey has a high council tax base meaning it has more band H houses, paying at least £3,692.70 in 2025, compared to other parts of the country.

The funding reforms under consideration could flatten out this advantage by reallocating resources away from wealthier counties like Surrey and towards lower-income authorities. Cllr Oliver warned the resulting drop in funding would not be completely offset by any increase in local council tax, leaving the council with a growing deficit and fewer levers to pull. “It’s absolutely essential that we drive efficiencies wherever possible,” he said. “Otherwise this council like many others I’m afraid will be in section 114 territory where we simply cannot have a balanced budget.” A Section 114 notice effectively means the council’s expenditure outweighs its income. As councils cannot go ‘bankrupt’ it stops the authority from spending any more money except from its legal responsibilities.

Despite the stark and solemn warnings, Cllr Oliver said the council was committed to avoiding that outcome and praised the authority’s efforts over the past six years to manage finances. He said: “Whether that’s lobbying the government or managing our budget locally [...] to make sure we can continue to provide services to our residents but that is going to be challenging.”

But government ministers would argue the current local government system is “broken” and outdated, with council tax bands still based on 1991 property values. A statement from the secretaries of state on the Fair Funding Review said: “Our reforms will take into account the different needs and costs faced by communities across the country, including adjusting for the costs of remoteness faced by rural communities, and the ability of individual local authorities to raise Council Tax, while also resetting business rates income. It will update the crucial formulae used to calculate funding allocations, which are a decade out of date.”

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Tim Oliver Surrey County Council leader – Surrey Live

## Big housing development proposed NW of Epsom and Ewell

31 July 2025



Over 2,000 new homes could be built on the Surrey border, to the right of Claygate and Esher, and above Epsom and Ewell. Plans for 2,003 new homes and a 104-bed care home are in the pipeline at Hook Park in Chessington, to the east of the A3 Esher Bypass and south of the A309 Kingston Bypass. If approved, residents say it could bring at least another 5,000 people into the area. Developers Poppymill Ltd envisions transforming the so-called derelict site into “a new family-friendly neighbourhood that centres around a huge public park and community spaces”. Around 50 per cent of the new builds could be affordable housing, of mixed tenures and with more than 600 homes for families. The proposed development site covers approximately 50 hectares of land and includes Chessington Equestrian Centre, ‘The Dell’ building and former scaffolding yards.

But residents claim the land is actually green belt status, preventing the urban sprawl of Chessington into neighbouring Surrey and providing an important green space. While the site is green belt, Poppymill argued the land is “compromised and inaccessible to the public” rendering it ‘grey-belt’, the developer claims. Details on the proposal are scarce, but initial planning documents indicated new terrace houses could be between two-four storeys tall, and apartment blocks could range from four-eight storeys high. No concrete plans have been announced, but Poppymill Ltd. has submitted a screening request which outlines the potential scheme.

The developer has asked the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames Council for a formal opinion on what information it should supply for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) – this is called ‘scoping’ – ahead of a planning application. But Elmbridge Borough Council has also been asked for their view on the application, given the massive potential development is close to the authority’s patch. The prospective plans also hint at community space including room for retail or leisure uses, employment space, a public house, community centre and an active travel hub. Plans also include highway improvements such as a new vehicle access road from the Kingston Bypass and Clayton Road, pedestrian and cycle access and car and bike parking.

Residents who wish to comment on the scheme can do so on Kingston council’s planning website. Comments are open until July 24, 2025.



Aerial view of the Hook Park site outlined in red. (Credit: Poppymill Ltd consultation website)

## Nurse demands 24 hour rail tickets to avoid night-shift double costs

31 July 2025



A specialist NHS nurse is calling for urgent train ticket reform after revealing she spends over £200 a month commuting to her job at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Alicia Arias, a paediatric cardiac intensive care nurse, has launched a campaign urging rail companies to introduce 24-hour train tickets. Her Change.org petition has already gained over 24,000 signatures. Alicia moved from London to Woking a year ago to save on rent and live in a house, said her monthly commuting costs regularly exceed £200 – despite using a discount Flexi Season ticket. She said: “Why am I living in Woking paying all of this money for trains that are always delayed?!”

Working 12-hour shifts, often overnight, Alicia said she is forced to buy two tickets for each shift: one to travel in and another to get home the next morning, as existing train tickets expire at 4:29am. “We go for a horrible night shift, we don’t have a break and then we have to pay for another ticket,” Alicia said. “It’s just not fair. It’s making it fair with 24hr tickets.” Working in paediatric intensive care, no day is the same. But every day can be gruelling. Alicia said: “I offer the treatment the last chance that kids have. It’s really hard but it’s really rewarding.” As a senior nurse, Alicia said her job ranges from teaching and supporting other nursing staff, sometimes taking over the patients, as well as looking after her own patients. “We are always short and we are always busy,” she said.

Although there are other hospitals in Surrey, Alicia said she never wants to leave her current job. “Working at Great Ormond Street Hospital is a great sense of achievement,” Alicia said. “It’s the best thing I’ve ever done – I love it.” Originally from Spain, Alicia said she was shocked by how expensive and inflexible British transport is. Alicia said she moved to the UK 13 years ago, but the “cultural shock” of how expensive and inflexible British transport is has only really come in the last year of moving to Woking. She explained in Madrid you can get transport passes for bus, train and rail for £70 a month. When Alicia lived in central London, she would cycle to work. “I take my bicycle from Waterloo to Great Ormond Street which is really busy,” she said. “I’m pretty sure I’m going to die on the bike one day.”

“I have sometimes regretted [moving to Woking],” Alicia admitted, explaining how she is constantly juggling to find the cheapest way to buy train tickets. Alicia said the campaign is not only for nurses but everyone. “But not only me but the cleaners, the maintenance workers, people in the kitchen, people who have lower salaries than me who are struggling more,” she said. “We’re all NHS. Not only shift workers in Surrey but everywhere in the UK. Shift workers that pay for two tickets and they do it quietly. No, it’s not fair.” Another campaign which Alicia started at the same time is her petition for an NHS railcard which has also reached nearly 3,000 signatures on the House of Commons website.

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: “While we are not planning to introduce 24-hour return tickets, we are overhauling the complex fares system to make rail travel simpler and more flexible for passengers. We’ve already delivered ticketing innovations such as contactless pay as you go to additional stations in Surrey this year, giving passengers the best value ticket for their journey, with additional stations expected to get the technology soon.”

Petition link: <https://www.change.org/p/make-train-day-tickets-last-24-hours-support-shift-workers>

House of Commons petition link: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/729126>

## Guildford going for new Town Council? Whither unitary authorities?

31 July 2025



Guildford could soon have its own town council for the first time in the hopes it would bring more local decision-making to its urban centre. The driving force behind this proposal is fears of a “democratic deficit” – with pending local government reorganisation looming, councils will be dissolved leaving some nervousness on how residents will be properly represented. The executive of Guildford Borough Council is looking at options for a formal ‘Community Governance Review’ to consider whether a parish council should be created to serve nearly half its residents in the currently unparished town centre. Members agreed to recommend the idea to the full council at an executive meeting on July 17.

If approved, it would bring Guildford in line with the surrounding villages (like Normandy or Ash) which already have their own parish councils. Unlike other parish areas like Shalford and Send, Guildford town has to rely solely on borough councillors to raise hyperlocal issues. Speaking at the meeting, Cllr Catherine Houston said: “Throughout this whole process of Local Government Reorganisation what has been missing has been the voice of the public, the imposition of this by the government without any consultation from people. We had the cancellation of the Surrey County Council election, so we have a democratic deficit currently going on within our county. This CGR allows people to decide whether they want to be represented at that very local level – that possibly could be lost, we don’t know – for an area of the borough which is not represented.”

Council reports state CGR aims to look at whether a town council would improve “community engagement, local democracy and service delivery”. The new body could also oversee things like town events, public toilets, benches, community grants and local planning consultations. If agreed, the new Guildford Town Council would be funded through a local council tax precept – a small extra charge already applied in parish areas. Normandy Parish Council required an extra £113.71, on top of ordinary council tax, for a Band D property for 2025/26. But other parishes vary. Around £300k could be spent in the first year setting up the new parish council which will be funded by Guildford council.

Boundaries, the number of councillors and a budget would likely be determined through consultation. The proposed town council would likely include wards such as Onslow, Stoke, Holy Trinity and Westborough. Technically, a CGR can only create parish councils and then, once established, can then agree to style itself as a town council. The earliest a town council would be created for the centre would be May 2027, with the elections to choose local representatives and possibly a

mayor. Despite the proposed consultations, Guildford Borough Council, as it currently stands, will have the final say on whether to establish the new body.

Guildford high street buildings, town centre. (Credit: Emily Dalton/LDRS)

## Surrey's NHS backlogs high

31 July 2025



Around 10 per cent of Surrey's population is currently stuck in the NHS backlog, facing long waits for crucial operations and cancer treatments, according to local health leaders.

Despite efforts to address delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, thousands of residents across the county are still waiting well beyond the national target of 18 weeks.

At a recent Surrey County Council meeting, NHS bosses revealed that while progress is being made, more than 200,000 people are still awaiting care, with over 4,000 of them waiting more than a year across Surrey. New measures like harm reviews, waiting list checks, and the opening of Ashford Elective Centre are being implemented, but staff shortages, IT issues, and NHS strikes continue to pose significant hurdles.

NHS bosses reported the significant results to Surrey county councillors at an Adults and Health Select Committee meeting on July 11. Chairing the meeting, Cllr Trefor Hogg said: "Roughly 10 per cent of the entire population of Surrey is somewhere in that backlog."

He explained that every person whose treatment is delayed suffers, their family suffers, the economy suffers and the NHS suffers as the patient's condition worsens.

Frimley InTegrated Care Board, including Frimley Park and Wexham Park hospitals still has around 89,000 people waiting for treatment - and more than 4,000 of those have been waiting over a year.

Although a slight improvement from previous years, only 55 per cent of patients are being treated within the NHS national target of 18 weeks.

Meanwhile, Surrey Heartlands ICB, which covers hospitals like Ashford & St Peter's, Royal Surrey and Epsom, is further ahead.

Its waiting list peaked in 2023 but has since come down significantly. Around 143,000 people are waiting for non-urgent but important elective care operations.

NHS bosses said the total waiting list across Surrey Heartlands' three hospitals has decreased from a peak of approximately 162,000 in September 2023 to about 143,000 by March 2025. Still, nearly 61,500 patients are waiting more than 18 weeks for treatment, while over 2,000 people have been on waiting lists for over a year. These figures far exceed pre-pandemic levels, where waits beyond a year were rare.

NHS bosses said they still recognise that waiting over a year is a huge amount of time to wait but they are working on driving the delays down.

Surrey NHS bosses credited the success of bringing waiting lists down to a range of new systems. These included a new 'harm review' for assessing patients who have been waiting over a year for surgery, waiting list validation to check there are no duplicates on the operations waiting list, and virtual consultations to monitor the patient's condition.

Surrey Heartlands has been fortunate enough to receive funding to open Ashford Elective Centre, focusing on trauma, orthopaedics and ophthalmology. So patients on a long waiting list at Royal Surrey Hospital, for example, can opt to come to Ashford elective centre for quicker treatment.

Both ICBs admitted there are still challenges including staff shortages, IT problems with new electronic health records, and the impact of ongoing NHS strikes such as the resident doctors.

## New planning laws threaten Surrey countryside?

31 July 2025



Fears of "irreversible damage" to Surrey's countryside have prompted calls to change a new planning bill currently going through parliament. Surrey County Council members have unanimously agreed to call for the central government to change a "deeply damaging" planning bill. Councillors voted in favour of an amended Green Party motion, highlighting serious concerns about the environmental implications of the potential legislation at a full council meeting on Tuesday (July 8).

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill currently going through Parliament aims to streamline the planning system to speed up the delivery of new homes and big infrastructure projects. But part of the bill includes the removal of some environmental red tape which the government argues is gridlocking the process. Councillor Jonathan Essex (Green Party/Redhill East) put forward the motion, stating: "If passed, this parliamentary bill will cause tragic, irretrievable and avoidable damage to Surrey's countryside. We must not let this Bill dismantle decades of progress in nature protection, including removing key principles of environmental governance from the planning system."

Surrey cabinet member for the Environment, Cllr Marisa Heath (Conservative/Englefield Green) supported the motion. She said the council is in favour of building new homes but "not to the detriment of the existing environment and residents". Cllr Heath praised Surrey MPs who had already taken a stand and voted against the bill in parliament but hinted there was still more work to do.

Key concerns raised by councillors focused on part three of the bill which outlines a mechanism that would allow developers to bypass current environmental rules by putting money into a nature restoration fund. But the fund could be used at a later date to create environmental improvement elsewhere in Surrey or beyond, according to Cllr Heath. She stressed that once the fee is paid, concreting over green spaces can go ahead with the developer measuring the potential harm to the site during the planning process, how irreversible or long-lasting it may be.

Cllr Essex's motion demanded the government "sufficiently amend" the relevant part of the bill. He said: "If Surrey's beautiful countryside is to be protected Section 3 of this Bill must be scrapped." The government has said the bill does not weaken environmental protections and will actually improve environmental



outcomes and nature recovery.

Councillors from across the political divide came out against the possibility of developers side-stepping key ecological safeguards to drive through house building. They claimed it would neither bring in the finances needed nor deliver the environmental healing nature needed. Cllr Essex claimed the bill “waters down habitat protections” to sites of specific scientific interest (SSSIs) and other protected areas in Surrey like Colony Bog and Bagshot Heath, Brookwood Heath and Chobham Common. He added the new rules will chip away protection granted to individual species such as bats, newts, wild birds and water voles.

Rather than green interests slowing down growth, Cllr Essex argued planning delays are driven by under-resourced planning authorities, infrastructure bottlenecks, and industry-led viability constraints. He said: “I am not sure how Rachel Reeves was able to keep a straight face when blaming newts for the failure to build homes when a third of homes given planning permission in the last decade, that is 1.4 million, were not built.”

Surrey Wildlife Trust has slammed the bill in its current form as ‘a licence to kill nature’ as well as the Office for Environmental Protection claiming it waters down the existing laws designed to protect the environment. A statement from the government read: “Crucially, the Bill will also ensure that vital protections for the environment remain in place and through a more strategic approach we can deliver more for nature and not less. Current rules in the National Planning Policy Framework are clear that development resulting in the loss or deterioration or irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, should be refused. This will not change through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.”

Surrey Hills National Landscape, Frensham Ponds (Image Natural England/ LYDIA2)

## Epsom Hospital workers to strike for equality?

31 July 2025



More than 200 essential hospital cleaners and porters could strike over NHS equality at a Surrey Hospital Trust. Approximately 258 NHS facilities workers at St Helier and Epsom Hospital Trust will vote whether to go on strike as they demand full equality with their hospital colleagues. The ballot will open today (July 1) and close on August 12, with potential strike dates to be announced in mid August. The workers, most of whom are from migrant and minority ethnic backgrounds, are NHS employees but are allegedly denied the NHS’s national pay system, terms and conditions. United Voices of the World (UVW), a campaigning trade union, is representing the group.

Dennis Gyamfi, a cleaner at Epsom Hospital and UVW member, said: “I’ve cleaned this hospital for seven years. My fellow cleaners, porters and caterers do essential work — yet we’ve never been treated with the same dignity as other NHS staff.” Key workers such as cleaners, porters and caterers were brought in-house in 2021 and released from private contracts. Campaigners and UVW claim they were not given the standard NHS contracts and remain on inferior terms. The union states workers get lower pay and also miss out on key benefits such as paid sick leave from day one, enhanced nights and weekend pay as well as lower pension contributions and are stuck on 24 days’ holiday, with no increase for length of service. The trade union argued the pay has been frozen and they are now formally moving toward strike action after the CEO and Board of Trustees refused to enter negotiations.

Mr Gyamfi added: “We are the pillars of this hospital — if we don’t clean, transport people around or serve food, patients and their families suffer. The board knows this. It’s time they gave us the respect we deserve. Change our contracts. Give us equality, dignity, and the recognition every NHS worker should have.” But Epsom and St Helier Hospital claim those on the London Living Wage have seen annual increases in the last three years which is well ahead of staff on the standard NHS contracts. The Hospital Trust also said staff have recently had a pay rise between 3-5.3 per cent was effective from April 1

“This is not just disappointing — it’s outrageous,” said Farrokh, a porter at St Helier Hospital and UVW member. “It is deeply troubling that a publicly-run organisation – whose duty should be to uphold fairness and protect its employees – appears to be taking steps that deprive its lowest-paid workers of rights and benefits long established by the NHS, government and unions.” Frustration has also deepened at St Helier Hospital, where staff reportedly contend with unsafe, degrading conditions, said to be impacting the wellbeing of both patients and hospital staff.

Around £60 million has been spent in the past five years improving facilities across the hospitals. But the ageing hospitals are deteriorating faster than the NHS can fix them, and bosses have accepted staff and patients deserve better. Through the New Hospital Programme, the government has committed to investing in plans to build a new hospital in Sutton and upgrade the existing hospitals, but construction will begin later than originally planned.

Petros Elia, UVW General Secretary, said: “These workers are as much a part of the NHS as any doctor, nurse, or administrator. They kept our hospitals running during the pandemic, yet in 2025 they’re still treated as second-class NHS employees. This two-tier system is degrading, demoralising and discriminatory. It sends a message that their labour matters less, and their lives matter less. And it must end.” An Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals spokesperson said: “Our porters and cleaners and everyone who works in our trusts are hugely valued and respected colleagues, and we were pleased to recently announce a pay rise of up to 5.3 per cent effective from 1st April. When colleagues were brought in-house in 2021 they received improved pay and conditions compared to their private contracts, including the London Living Wage. We understand their concerns and remain open to engaging with our colleagues and their Unions.”

Workers at Epsom and St Helier Hospitals to vote on strike action. (Credit: United Voices of the World)

## Student overdose leads to policy change

31 July 2025



A university student from Surrey could have been saved from an overdose if police had left a voicemail for her parents, an inquest jury has found. Despite needing to find her address, officers did not leave a message. Amy Levy, 22, deliberately took an overdose of her prescription pills at her student home in Bristol while on the phone to a friend on June 18, 2023. Her friend alerted the police as Amy’s condition worsened. Surrey Police and Avon and Somerset Police launched an urgent search to find the University of the West of England (UWE) student and tried to contact her parents, who live in Surrey, because they did not know her address. But when officers and staff tried to reach Amy’s parents, no one picked up the phone to the number showing ‘no caller ID’. The calls were left unanswered, unable to ring back and no voicemail was left despite the gravity of the situation. Amy was eventually located more than 90 minutes after the first police call. Sadly, she died in hospital on June 22, 2023 from an overdose of different medications which caused hypoxic brain injury.

In a statement, Amy’s parents said: “We are totally broken that Amy is no longer with us, but we are also so proud of Amy and grateful for the time we had her in our lives.” An inquest jury identified a “catalogue of missed opportunities” to save Amy. The five-day inquest from June 6, 2025 concluded if the police had found her sooner, she would have survived. The jury said that despite taking a deliberate overdose of prescription drugs, it was not possible to know her true intent. Robert Sowersby, Assistant Coroner for Avon, has now issued a report raising concern about the lack of guidance or training issued to officers and staff about leaving voicemail messages – especially in circumstances where they are trying to obtain important information in a time-pressured situation. He said it was “hard to understand” why all of the officers or police staff decided not to leave any voicemail or message despite both forces grading Amy’s case as requiring an “immediate” response, the most urgent category.

“Both police forces knew that Amy had taken an overdose at an unknown address and that her condition was deteriorating,” the report said. “Despite that factual background, none of the officers or call handlers who phoned Amy’s parents left a voicemail message.” The inquest found that because the missed calls were from an unknown number, Amy’s parents did not know that there was an emergency, or that the police wanted to speak with them, and had no way of calling them back. Assistant coroner Sowersby wrote: “It is probable that Amy’s location could have been obtained earlier than it was if the police had left a suitably worded voicemail for one or more of her parents.” Surrey Police attended the family home in person and received details of Amy’s current address, which led to officers being able to find her in Bristol, Avon and Somerset Police said.

Police inspectors from both forces gave evidence at the inquest. There was guidance in Avon not to leave voicemails when the incident in question concerns domestic abuse, but there is no general guidance about when to leave a voicemail message in other cases. Surrey Police provided the coroner with evidence of updated voicemail procedure indicating that callers must consider if it is appropriate to leave a voicemail or message. Mr Sowersby said: “With limited or no guidance, training or policy on when police and/or police support staff liaising with the public should leave a voicemail, particularly in circumstances where they are trying to obtain important information in a time-pressured situation, I am concerned that there is a risk that future deaths will occur unless action is taken.”

Iftikhar Manzoor, of Hudgell Solicitors, represented Amy’s parents at the Inquest and said her death ‘must lead to clear policies’ across UK police forces when the risk to an individual has been graded as the highest level of urgency. He said: “What has been truly shocking to learn has been the fact that there is no system in place with regard to leaving messages in a situation where somebody’s life is quite clearly at risk, and the only person posing a danger to them is themselves. The calls were shown as unknown numbers, and as the police chose not to leave messages and only made one call attempt, a huge opportunity was lost immediately, and the sense of urgency dropped. It was the bare minimum effort.”

Responding to the coroner’s report, Superintendent Chris Colley of Surrey Police said: “Our thoughts and condolences remain with Amy’s friends and family following what must have been a very hard couple of years for her loved ones.” He added: “We have now made changes to our procedure around the use of voicemails and telephone contact attempts, to ensure we are doing all we can to be there for people when they need us most.” A spokesman for Avon and Somerset Police said: “Our thoughts are with the family of Amy Levy, who died in extremely tragic circumstances two years ago. A private apology has been made to her family, which we wish to repeat publicly, and we are reviewing our organisational policies in line with the findings relating to this case.” Avon and Somerset Police also said they are looking at potential changes to force polices as guided by an Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) learning recommendation earlier this month. The spokesperson said: “We will ensure any necessary changes to help protect the public are adopted and will provide a further update to the IOPC and coroner in due course.”

HM Coroners Court Woking Surrey