

IN THE WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON CORONER'S COURT

BEFORE THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE BARONESS HALLETT DBE

IN THE MATTER OF THE INQUEST TOUCHING THE DEATH OF DAWN STURGESS

**WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS ON BEHALF OF HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT
FOR THE PRE-INQUEST HEARING ON 17 DECEMBER 2021**

1. In written submissions dated 1 December 2021, Counsel to the Inquest (CTI) identified the following issues as matters to be considered on 17 December 2021 at the third Pre-Inquest Review Hearing ("PIR") into the death of Ms Dawn Sturgess:
 - a. Public Inquiry
 - b. Further Procedural Matters
 - c. Next PIR.

2. Her Majesty's Government ('HMG') advances the following submissions in response to those issues identified.

Public Inquiry

3. As set out in paragraphs 4 and 29 of CTI's submission, the Secretary of State for the Home Department has decided to establish a public inquiry into the death of Dawn Sturgess to be chaired by the Rt Honourable the Baroness Heather Hallett. The terms of reference requested by the Coroner have been agreed. These mirror the statutory obligations of the inquest, including those prescribed by section 5 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The

next steps as set out at paragraphs 12 to 14 of CTI submissions are underway. The Home Office will do its utmost, working alongside the Coroner and her team, to enable the first hearing to take place on 24 February 2022.

4. The Secretary of State will give consideration to the issue of restriction notices and (once the inquiry is established) to restriction orders. We note that submissions as to the arrangements and timings for restriction order applications and for applications for anonymity and special measures will be required at the next hearing.

Designation of Core Participants

5. We agree that the Coroner ought to designate all those who have been recognised as IPs in the inquest as Core Participants in the inquiry without formal applications. We note that every Core Participant must consent to designation, pursuant to Rule 5(1) of the Inquiry Rules 2006. The Secretary of State confirms through these submissions her consent to designation on behalf of HMG.

Further Procedural Matters

Disclosure

6. The ILT has helpfully highlighted the special sensitivities of the case and the need for an exceptionally careful, complex and therefore necessarily time-consuming process for all stages of disclosure. The sensitivities in this case cannot be overstated and the ongoing disclosure work needs to take place with the utmost care in order to protect the UK from threats to our national security.

7. HMG has arranged a secure working environment for the Coroner and ILT and provided its key and core documents to assist in defining the inquest/inquiry's scope. Work is now underway to provide copies of the additional material requested by the ILT.
8. The HMG legal team are devising a bespoke disclosure strategy for each government department and agency which holds or might hold relevant material that is or could be relevant to the inquiry. These strategies will be finalised through further liaison with the ILT. These strategies explain for the ILT the relevant or potentially relevant work that each department, agency or team was doing in 2018 that has or might have a bearing on how Dawn Sturgess came by her death, the documents held and the proposed processes of identifying or searching for relevant documents. The circumstances of the case are such that it is neither possible nor helpful to rely on keyword searches as they would not identify relevant material and would produce too much entirely irrelevant material. The strategies are therefore detailed and lengthy and are designed to ensure that the next stage of the disclosure process has been carefully thought through so as to allow the ILT to identify areas of interest and enable HMG departments and agencies to ensure the disclosure process is proportionate and effective.
9. The HMG legal team is holding regular meetings with the ILT to ensure that they are kept abreast of the large amount of work that is underway.

CATHRYN McGAHEY QC
GEORGINA WOLFE

10 December 2021