



Dr Andrew Harris
H M Coroner
London Inner South

Letter sent by email:
[REDACTED]

26 February 2016

Dear Dr Harris,

Regulation 28 Report to Prevent Future Deaths following the inquest of Imran Douglas who died in the care of HM Prison Belmarsh on 13 November 2013

I am writing in response to your investigation into the circumstances surrounding the tragic death of Imran Douglas. Whilst I recognise that the key matters of concern outlined in your Report to Prevent Future Deaths have not been directed at the Youth Justice Board (YJB), the YJB takes its responsibility to act on serious incidents that offer learning to the youth justice system very seriously.

I therefore offer you this response to highlight where the YJB has and will continue to use its role to support and influence some of the changes you seek in your recommendations.

Matter of concern one: The system of placements at transition

Ultimately whether the YJB's remit should be extended, as your report suggests, is a question for Government. The current review of the Youth Justice System, due to report in the summer, will explore how the youth justice system can more effectively interact with wider services and whether the current arrangements remain suitable for the future.

The YJB are clear that young adults, such as Imran, who transition from or have previously been in the youth secure estate are often particularly vulnerable. In recognising this, and further to the evidence provided to your inquest, we have provided you below with an update about the work the YJB has undertaken with a number of partners and stakeholders to seek to improve the transition process between youth and adult justice services, both in the community and in custody.

Most recently, this has included work alongside the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) on strengthening and revising transitions guidance, and in publishing the joint national transitions protocol¹ which was provided to you as a draft document in our evidence. The protocol between youth offending teams and probation services intends to ensure that there is a

¹ Published November 2015: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-national-protocol-for-transitions-in-england>

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clear understanding of the responsibilities of each organisation and the transition process is carried out as smoothly as possible. Since publication in November last year approximately 60% of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) have now signed up to this protocol and committed to developing their local arrangements. We are working with the remaining YOTs to ensure commitment to the protocol.

In January 2016 we also updated the YJB's Case Management Guidance, which provides practitioners and managers with a comprehensive overview of how to deliver youth justice services. The guidance supports the joint national protocol and promotes best practice in planning for young people who turn 18 whilst under community supervision or in custody. In line with your finding that transitions plans should be person-based, and not rule-based, the guidance focuses on making decisions on a case-by-case basis to best support individual safety and well-being, and continued protection of the public

You will also be aware of the agreement in place between the YJB and NOMS to ensure that transition should not occur from court to the adult estate (unless it is part of a Transition Plan). Where transition is necessary, the individual would return to the young people's estate to ensure the move is made in a planned way and supported by a considered approach to their placement in adult custody.

Matter of concern two: The adequacy of knowledge and interagency working between social care in London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the secure estate

We know that looked after children are disproportionately represented amongst children in the youth justice system. Whilst the YJB recognise that there is still more that can be done to better support the interface between children's social care and the secure estate, we are clear that the evidence provided by the Head of Children's Services for Tower Hamlets on the way in which communication between their staff and the secure estate is facilitated was inaccurate and in contradiction to the evidence of YOT staff and National Standards for Youth Justice. We have written to the Director of Children's Services at Tower Hamlets to remind them of expectations and assure ourselves of their practice in the future.

For the avoidance of doubt, it is clear in both legislation, policy and guidance that from a social care perspective local authorities retain their responsibilities to looked after children when they are in custody. Similarly, YOTs have case management responsibility for young people subject to community or custodial sentences until such time as their sentences end or their cases are transferred to adult services.

Matter of concern three: The adequacy of communication systems between agencies

We are clear that the safety and wellbeing of children and young people placed in custody is secured when there is timely and effective information sharing that allows for informed assessments of needs and the identification of risks to support appropriate interventions.

As you have identified the use of different IT and case management systems by different organisations makes it difficult for these systems to speak to each other, impeding the flow of information. The Y2A Portal, about which we gave evidence to the inquest, has been successfully implemented across England and Wales. Additional work is underway to consider how the portal can be used by YOTs to provide information to young adult establishments if a young adult was previously known to them.

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I hope that the information I have provided offers some assurances that the findings of your investigations and the areas you have highlighted for the prevention of future deaths have prompted action as part of the YJB continuing commitment to support the safety and wellbeing of children throughout the youth justice system.

Yours sincerely,



Lin Hinnigan
Chief Executive
Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

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