



# Department of Health

From Nicola Blackwood MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Innovation

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Dr Andrew Harris  
HM Senior Coroner – Inner London South  
Southward Coroner's Court  
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Dear Dr Harris

10 January 2017

Thank you for your letter to Secretary of State about the death of Richard Walsh. I am responding as the Minister with responsibility for mental health policy at the Department of Health (DH).

I was saddened to read of the circumstances surrounding Mr Walsh's death. Please pass my condolences to her family and loved ones.

Mr Walsh committed suicide while an inmate at HMP Belmarsh. The Coroner has detailed Mr Walsh's experiences while detained the police station and two prisons, finding a number of failures. The inquest jury found that he would not have died had he been 'sectioned'.

I note that your report has also been sent to Ministry of Justice, Home Office and local healthcare providers for response. I am writing regarding the concern specifically addressed to DH around Appropriate Mental Health Professional training [REDACTED]

You wrote that '...the inadequacy of the nurse assessment of fitness for segregation in HMP Highdown is a risk. [REDACTED] was not ACCT trained and it appeared that he was unaware of PSI 1700. The inadequacy may reflect individual of wider weakness in assessment or choice of assessors that mean that prisoners go to segregation when they should be in the health care wing, or that they go without observation, when they should be on an ACCT and receive extra support.'

You asked that the inquest findings be brought to the attention of those who lead the 'Departmental training programme' for Approved Mental Healthcare Practitioners (AMHPs) and consideration be given as to whether further guidance or training regarding Mental Health Act Assessments is required.

Responsibility for approving and monitoring AMHP programmes offered by Higher Education Institutions in England (HEIs) is held by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

The HCPC is an independent, UK-wide regulatory body which has responsibility for approving and monitoring AMHP programmes offered by HEIs in England. They have

published criteria, that set out its expectations of educational providers and individuals completing these programmes.


To explain, to be approved to act as an Approved Mental Health Professional by a local social services authority, AMHPs must have undertaken an accredited training course provided at a higher education institution, and on completion of that course, be able to demonstrate competence to practise in the role. Schedule 2 of the Mental Health (Approved Mental Health Professionals) (Approval) (England) Regulations 2008 sets out the competences of an AMHP required by law.

There is a statutory requirement that the AMHP is approved each year. To achieve this, the AMHP must complete at least 18 hours of training agreed with the approving Social Services Authority as being relevant to their role as an AMHP as stated in the Regulations [5(a)].

The criteria for approving AMHP programmes are designed to equip individuals with the threshold skills necessary to engage in safe and effective practice. They set out the processes and procedures that education providers delivering AMHP training must have in place, and the knowledge, understanding and skills that an individual must have when they complete their AMHP training, including the necessary knowledge and skills to undertake formal Mental Health Act Assessments.

As requested, I have brought your report to the attention of the HCPC and asked them to respond to you directly.

I hope that this information is useful. Thank you for bringing the circumstances of Mr Walsh's death to our attention.

*Yours sincerely*  
  
**NICOLA BLACKWOOD**