



HM Prison & Probation Service

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G A Short
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09 January 2018

Dear Mr Short,

Inquest into the death of Sean Plumstead

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 19 October 2017 following the conclusion of the inquest into the death of Sean Plumstead.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Sean's mother and I would like first to express my condolences for her loss. Every death in custody is a tragedy and the safety of those in our care is my absolute priority.

I am grateful to you for bringing these matters of concern to my attention, and I will address them in the order in which they appear in your report.

ACCT Training

Your first concern is that targets for suicide and self-harm training at HMP Winchester are not being met, and that as a result there is a growing proportion of

staff who have not been trained and may not recognise prisoners at risk of suicide and self-harm.

I note that you have been given information about training in evidence at this and other inquests, and in response to previous Regulation 28 reports. There have recently been some changes in the training that is being delivered on this subject, and I think it will be helpful for me to explain these changes before moving on to address your point about targets.

PSI 64/2011 Safer Custody states that: *“All staff in contact with prisoners must be trained to at least ACCT Foundation level. From January 2012 ACCT Foundation will be replaced by Introduction to Safer Custody and new staff must be trained in this. ACCT refresher training must be provided according to local training needs.”*

The Introduction to Safer Custody course to which this refers was replaced by the Introduction to Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention course, known as SASH, in May 2017. Like its predecessor courses, the SASH course is being delivered to all new prison officers as part of their entry level training, and to all new staff in other prisoner-facing roles. It has also been developed in modular form so that it can be delivered as refresher training to existing staff.

The ACCT training at Winchester about which you have previously been informed was a two hour course, provided locally as refresher training, in accordance with the PSI above. This has now been replaced by the SASH training, which consists of six modules, including one on mental health awareness, totalling one and a half days in duration.

The targets for the programme of refresher training have been revised to reflect the fact that the new training takes much longer to complete. This, together with the resourcing challenges that the Prison faced during the summer months, and the lack of availability of trainers equipped to deliver the new course means that it is now projected that the new course will have been delivered to all existing staff who have contact with prisoners by the end of September 2018. Additional staff will be trained as trainers in early 2018 in order to facilitate this.

Crucially, this does not mean that untrained staff who are unable to recognise prisoners at risk are being deployed in the prison. The training targets relate to the completion of the local refresher training. So, whilst the figures that you quote show a temporary reduction in the proportion of staff who are “in date” in terms of the local requirement to have undertaken such training within the last three years, this does not mean that there are staff in prisoner-facing roles who have never been trained. Moreover, the refresher training that the staff are now undertaking is much more extensive, and contains more detailed information about risk, than the ACCT training that was previously available. For this reason I am confident that the changes that have been made to the training programme will have the effect of improving staff awareness and capacity to identify and address risk.

You may also be interested to know that HMPPS has worked with Samaritans to develop a Suicide Prevention Learning Tool that is now available on the HMPPS

intranet. This consists of a series of short films that communicate important messages about suicide prevention through interviews with staff who share their own experiences. They tackle some of the myths about suicide, explain how to identify and help somebody at risk and describe the sources of support available for staff who are affected by issues related to suicide and self-harm. Since the films were released in October, feedback has been that staff find them engaging and inspiring, as they recognise the important role that staff play, intervening every day to support men and women at risk, whilst acknowledging that approaching a prisoner who appears distressed can be difficult and providing useful tips about how to do so.

Training of all prisoner-facing staff

Your next concern relates to the fact that prisoner-facing staff who were employed by Carillion had not received any ACCT training and that the Prison did not hold training records for these staff.

I can confirm that a number of Carillion staff in prisoner-facing roles at HMP Winchester have been trained, and that records of training delivered to all staff, including those who are not directly employed, are now held. These records do not, however, include information about the internal training programmes of other employers.

I accept that the requirement for prisoner-facing staff to undertake suicide and self-harm prevention training was not specifically brought to the attention of Carillion when their contract began, and I can confirm that a Service Manager's Instruction will be issued imminently to ensure that Carillion, and our other contractors, are made aware of the requirement and their contractual obligation to comply with it. Both HMPPS and Carillion are committed to ensuring that all relevant staff are trained as soon as possible.

Emergency Cell Bells

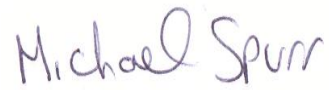
Your final concern relates to the effectiveness or otherwise of emergency call bells (ECBs), the expected response times and the widespread misuse of ECBs by prisoners.

All staff at Winchester have been issued with individual notices about the importance of answering ECBs promptly within the required time. Prisoners have again been issued with information about the risks caused to themselves and others by misuse of ECBs. In addition, the ECB response times are now checked every day in order to improve accountability, and the Governor is preparing a bid for funding to upgrade the ECB system. The range of sanctions available for prisoners misusing ECBs will increase following the rollout of digital in-cell equipment in 2018, as abuse of the ECB system may result in the removal of this equipment.

At national level a learning bulletin for staff on the importance of responding promptly to ECBs, and tackling abuse of them by prisoners, will be issued early in 2018.

Thank you again for bringing these matters of concern to my attention. Please be assured that as well as driving the actions described above at Winchester, learning from the circumstances of Mr Plumstead's tragic death will be shared widely across the prison estate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Michael Spurr". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Spurr