



HM Prison &  
Probation Service

LBHF CORONERS & MORTUARY

19 MAR 2018

**Michael Spurr**  
**Chief Executive**  
**HM Prison and Probation Service**  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor 102 Petty France  
London  
SW1H 9AJ  
Email: ceohmpps@noms.gsi.gov.uk

Miss Ormand-Walshe  
West London Coroner's Court  
25 Bagley's Lane  
Fulham  
London  
SW6 2QA

06 March 2018

Dear Miss Ormand-Walshe,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report of 10 January 2018 following the recent inquest into the death of John O'Meara at HMP Wormwood Scrubs on 29 March 2016.

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

Your first concern is with the failure immediately to use an emergency response code, something that has also occurred in other cases. I understand that you heard evidence about a variety of steps that are being taken locally to ensure that staff are aware of the importance of using the correct emergency code. Regular notices to staff are published, signs are displayed in all offices and information about emergency response procedures is included in the induction for all new staff. More recently, notices have been attached to all cell doors in the First Night Centre, and early indications are that staff have found this useful. Plans are in place to extend this

arrangement to other high risk areas such as healthcare, segregation and the detox unit later this month. As you may know, the member of staff to whom you refer who continued not to understand the system even after giving evidence at the inquest is no longer employed at the prison.

Please be assured that the Governor is seized of the importance of this issue and will keep the situation under review in order to identify any further steps that can be taken to ensure that staff are aware of the emergency codes and understand when to use them.

Your second concern is that the number of passive drug dogs available at the prison is not sufficient to provide an effective response to the supply and use of psychoactive substances.

I agree that we need to improve our capacity to address this issue, and I am pleased to report that the London and Thames Valley regional search team is currently recruiting additional dog handlers to increase the service provided to prisons in the region. This includes HMP Wormwood Scrubs, which will be provided with a total of seven dog handlers, with both passive and active search and patrol dogs.

Thank you again for bringing these matters of concern to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael Spurr".

Michael Spurr