



HM Prison & Probation Service

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Mr T Osborne
Senior Coroner
HM Coroner's Office,
Civic Centre,
1 Saxon Gate East,
Milton Keynes,
MK9 3EJ

Date: 30th September 2019

Dear Mr Osborne

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report dated 26 July 2019 following the inquest into the death of Mr William Vickers at HMP Woodhill. I am also grateful to you for granting a short extension to the usual deadline for reply.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Mr Vickers' 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.

You raised one matter of concern for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS): that, once the ambulance was admitted through the main gate, it took eleven minutes for it to be escorted through five sets of gates to the incident. You asked that consideration be given to a robust system for ensuring that all gates are opened promptly by staff so that the ambulance is not in any way hindered in getting to the patient.

Since Mr Vickers' inquest the contingency plans at HMP Woodhill have been updated to ensure that there are no delays to the process of receipt of any emergency vehicle, including ambulances during night state. When a code red or blue is called, the control room contacts South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) immediately. When this occurs during night state, members of staff report to the prison gate to await the arrival of the ambulance, and to assist the responding dog handler with opening the gates to the units.

An additional Operational Support Grade (OSG) also attends the gate to assist with receiving the emergency vehicle into the prison and searching. The level of search of the vehicle is determined on the basis of an assessment of the circumstances of the emergency, to avoid any unnecessary delay.

In the meantime, staff arriving at the scene and entering the cell give further details of the person's name and current condition to the control room who pass this on to SCAS so that the attending ambulance staff are informed and prepared on arrival.

All Custodial Managers will have had the opportunity to take part in a live test of the arrangements for the receipt of emergency vehicles. Training for OSGs is being delivered on the establishment's bi-monthly training afternoons, and all will have completed it before the end of 2019.

Thank you again for bringing this matter of concern to my attention. I hope this response has provided reassurance that it is being fully addressed by the Governor at HMP Woodhill and HMPPS.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Copple". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a clear "C" for "Copple".

PHIL COPPLE

Director General for Prisons