



# HM Prison & Probation Service

**Phil Copple**  
**Director General Prisons**  
**HM Prison and Probation Service**  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London SW1H 9AJ

Email: [DirectorGeneralPrisons@justice.gov.uk](mailto:DirectorGeneralPrisons@justice.gov.uk)

Mr Nicholas Rheinberg  
Assistant Coroner for Lancashire & Blackburn with Darwen  
Coroners Court  
2 Faraday Court  
Faraday Drive  
Preston PR2 9NB

26 November 2020

Dear Mr Rheinberg

Thank you for Regulation 28 report of 5 October 2020, addressed to the Governor at HMP Garth, following the recent inquest into the death of Wesley Rowlands at the prison on 14 October 2016. I am responding as Director General of Prisons.

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

During the inquest, evidence was given that a number of cells at HMP Garth have television brackets, which are no longer in use, built into the structure of the cells walls, and you have expressed concern that unless removed they will continue to present a potential ligature point.

Please be assured that this is an issue that we take very seriously, and arrangements have already been made by our Prison Maintenance Group to review all cells at HMP Garth and to remove the brackets. This work was delayed by the restrictions that we implemented in response to the pandemic, but I can confirm that it will be completed by February 2021. We are seeking also to address any similar risks in other prisons by reviewing all accommodation of the same type, and looking back at reported self-harm incidents, so that we can identify and remove any other unused brackets that offer ligature points. We will also alert Prison Group Directors and Governors to the concerns that you have reported, so that they are aware of the importance of identifying unused brackets and taking prompt action to remove them.

Your concerns will inform our decisions relating to future prison capacity and our approach on new prison builds, including house block expansion designs. Our new prison design, which is being used for HMP Five Wells, the new prison at Glen Parva and four other new prisons, includes cells that will be finished to a 'safer cell' standard, meaning that ligature points have been designed out as far as possible and other design and construction

measures have been taken to minimise the instances of self-harm. A number of observation cells have also been placed in each of the houseblocks and Care & Separation Units (CASU) so that prisoners who have been identified as at immediate risk of self-harm can be monitored and managed appropriately. These cells will be used alongside the support provided to a prisoner from staff, healthcare providers and other partners. In addition, cells have been designed to reduce 'blind spots', enabling staff to check and confirm the wellbeing of prisoners more effectively.

Thank you again for bringing these matters of concern to my attention. We will ensure learning from this tragic incident is taken forward.

Yours sincerely,



Director General for Prisons