

Dr Jeane Rosa Mellani
HM Assistant Coroner for Essex Coroner's Court
Seax House
Duke Street
Chelmsford
CM1 1QH

28 December 2023

Dear Dr Mellani

In response to your Regulation 28 notice dated 13/11/2023.

Re: Mr John Paul Pace deceased.

On 30/07/2020 The Coroner commenced an investigation into the death of Mr John Paul Pace. The investigation concluded at the end of the inquest on 25/10/2023.

The conclusion of the inquest was a short form conclusion of "Drug Related Death".

CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DEATH

On 29/11/2019, Mr John-Paul Pace was recalled to prison after being arrested for a drug related offence. He was sent to HMP Chelmsford. When he arrived at Chelmsford, Mr Pace tested positive for both opioids and cocaine. He was put on a drug detoxification programme and was prescribed methadone (an opiate substitute), which was progressively reduced over the following months. He was under the care of the GP to manage his depression and of the Integrated Drug Treatment Services to manage his drug use.

On 28/05/2020, Mr Pace stopped taking methadone, before he had completed the methadone reduction programme. He was prescribed medication to help with the expected withdrawal symptoms.

Shortly after 8.00am on 22/07/2020 Mr Pace was found unresponsive. An ambulance attended the prison and Mr Pace was certified dead at 8.16am.

- Mr Pace was serving a prison sentence at HMP Chelmsford for a drug related offence;
- Mr Pace was under the care of the Integrated Drug Treatment Service delivered by Forward Trust and was following a methadone detoxification programme;
- Mr Pace decided to stop methadone against medical advice before completing the detoxification programme;
- The post mortem examination concluded Mr Pace's likely medical cause of death was "synthetic cannabinoid misuse". The synthetic cannabinoid in question is known as "██████".



CORONER'S CONCERNS

The matters of concern identified in the notice are as follows.

'The organisations responsible for the delivery of drug related services at HMP Chelmsford are Castle Rock Group (CRG) as the main contractor of health related services and Forward Trust as their sub-contractors for the drug treatment element of the service'.

'One of the material issues in evidence was about changes in the discharge pathway for prisoners on methadone detoxification as well as those who decided to stop the detoxification programme before completion. CRG identified the need for this change in their Root Cause Analysis review and their live witnesses provided evidence that this new process is now being followed'.

'Forward Trust provided evidence that this is the new process now embedded in their operating procedure. However, no documentary evidence of this new drug detoxification discharge pathway seems to exist, no protocols, no written procedures, no policy, no addendum to existing policies and procedures'.

'It is my concern that this new discharge pathway aimed at providing monitoring and support to prisoners who stop or complete the programme whilst in prison, has not been embedded in your organisations' operating procedure and as such, there is a risk to prisoners in the future as compliance with the new discharge pathway and consistency of operations cannot be ensured'.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION UTILISED

1. We have consulted with the witness bundle and had discussions with the [REDACTED], Head of Healthcare HMP Chelmsford.
2. I have had discussions with Forward Trust staff, [REDACTED] (Head of Custodial Nursing Services) and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (Lead Nurse, HMP Chelmsford).
3. Reviewed the expert report dated 23/08/2021.

SUMMARY/RESPONSE

Following an internal audit of the relevant policies and procedures, we have now drafted and implemented a new protocol on the 'Management of Non-engaging Service Users Protocol' provided with our response.

The new protocol has now been published on the policy section of our Intranet. A dissemination and training programme has been facilitated using the matrix and Staff signatory documents contained within the appendices of the protocol. We have also added the protocol to the Clinical Governance, Managers and Staff meeting agendas.



The Forward Trust
Unit 106, Edinburgh House
170 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5DP

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Finally the Forward Trust prides itself on providing evidence based best practice to the most vulnerable and marginalized in society. We are committed to supporting our partners in delivering coordinated care for our patients. We readily welcome any Coroner's observations and directions to continually improve our services.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Clinical Director - The Forward Trust