



HM Prison &
Probation Service

Probation
Service



West Midlands

[REDACTED]
Regional Probation Director
West Midlands Probation Service
19th Floor Centre City House
Birmingham
B5 4UA

Mrs. Louise Hunt
Senior Coroner for Birmingham & Solihull
Coroner's Court
Steelhouse Lane
Birmingham B4 6BJ

27th September 2024

(sent by email to: [REDACTED])

Dear Mrs. Hunt,

Inquest into the death of Jacob Michael Nicholas Billington

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report, issued following the Inquest into the death of Jacob Billington addressed to HMPPS (His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service). I am the Regional Probation Director for West Midlands Probation and am replying on behalf of HMPPS.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with the family and I would first like to express my sincere condolences for their loss.

You have raised the following areas of concerns to which I respond as follows:-

1. Management of release and lack of interagency working *The management of the perpetrator's release was not coordinated and there was inadequate communication between relevant agencies. In effect agencies worked in silos. Critical information is not being shared and agencies work in different IT systems meaning there is no one place where information is collated and hence a comprehensive account of matters known to each agency is not easily available to those professionals who may need to know a high risk prisoner's whereabouts on release. This concern was reinforced by evidence heard during the inquest that changes made since Jacob's death did not include resettlement information being given to Mental Health In reach teams in the prison. The failure to share information leads to a concern of*

future deaths as high risk seriously unwell prisoners may be released without key agencies knowing where they are meaning they are not traced and treated assertively in the community.

For a prisoner to still be detained in custody at the point of sentence expiry is usually as a result of them having being recalled to custody. This means they remain the responsibility of the Probation Community Offender Manager (COM) until the point of release at the sentence end date (SED). There is no statutory authority for Probation supervision of a prisoner released into the community at SED. The sharing of information prior to release into the community in an effective manner with relevant agencies is therefore of paramount importance. The Probation Service West Midlands has a practice document which sets out the expectations for Practitioners when cases are being released at SED. This document has been revised and re issued to all staff and embedded in development sessions delivered by the Regional Quality Team. The processes to be followed prior to release include completion of a termination OASys (offender assessment) risk assessment which will identify the areas of risk which require the sharing of information with other agencies and, if applicable, under Multi Agency Public Protection (MAPPA) arrangements.

MAPP arrangements are overseen by a Strategic Management Board (SMB) and in the West Midlands this Board will continue to review and refine practices to ensure interagency working is effective and to support the sharing of relevant risk information. The findings in this case have been presented to MAPPA SMB. The SMB is committed to ensuring their part in providing avenues to share information. Furthermore, the SMB has reinforced the statutory requirement for all duty to cooperate agencies in the MAPPA arena.

2. Systmone

Systmone is an IT system used by healthcare professionals, and is not a system that HMPPS can access, review or change.

3. Cross agency guidance regarding release of high risk prisoners with mental health difficulties at their sentence end date *There are no provisions available nor any cross agency guidance in place for when a high-risk prisoner is released at sentence end date to ensure that there is adequate release planning and maximum support in the community.*

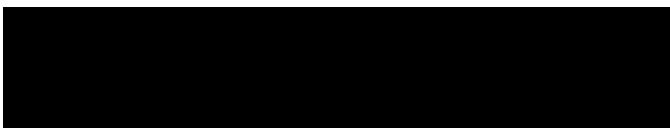
NHS-England are commissioned to provide healthcare in Prisons. The sharing of information between health in custody and health in the community is a core feature of the nationally rolled out NHS-England Reconnect Service. West Midlands Probation Service has actively promoted the Reconnect Service with Probation Practitioners in recent months to ensure they are aware of how to refer into this service in Prison for support “through the gate”, the transition period from prison into the community.

4. West Midlands MAPPA *has a prison discharge coordinator role. It was clear from the evidence at the inquest that this role was not fully understood by other agencies and what information needed to be shared was not clear. The new policy drafted by BSMHT remained confused as to which cases were to fall within the responsibility of the prison discharge coordinator role. There remains a risk of further deaths as the role is not properly understood and information sharing is not effective.*

The Prison Discharge Coordinator role is a Health Trust bespoke role in Birmingham and Solihull. West Midlands Probation Service welcomes the investment in this role for this area and will work with the Health Trust to support any Guidance revisions undertaken by the Health Trust to ensure that the Guidance is clear and enables effective information sharing and can be embedded within and understood by all in the Probation Service.

Thank you for bringing these matters of concern to my attention. Please be assured that since I attended Jacob's inquest, learning from the circumstances of this tragic death has been shared more widely with colleagues and will continue to inform improvements across all the Probation Regions.

Yours sincerely,

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Regional Probation Director

West Midlands Probation Service