



HM Prison & Probation Service

Director General of Operations
HM Prison and Probation Service
8th Floor Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Mr. Nick ARMSTRONG KC,
Assistant Coroner for the coroner area of West Sussex, Brighton and Hove

24th May 2024

Dear Mr Armstrong,

Inquest Touching the Death of Francis Ian Williams

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report of 27th March 2024 following the Inquest into the death of Francis Williams. I am responding on behalf of the Rt Hon Alex Chalk KC MP, Minister of Justice and the Chief Probation Officer, [REDACTED].

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Mr. Williams' family, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my condolences for their loss.

You raised the following concerns -

1. That probation officers need to understand, and be constantly alert to, the risk of suicide/self-harm in IPP offenders. It is clear from Mr Williams' case, but also from other cases and other evidence, that this cohort often experiences a particular kind of despair. That is fuelled in part by the particular sense of unfairness that they feel about being on an IPP at all, now the sentence has been abolished and all agree that IPP sentences were a terrible idea. The other factor is the absence of hope of ever getting off it.

2. Linked to that second point, it is crucial that probation officers are also fully versed in the processes for suspending parole licence supervision and then cancelling it altogether. One of the real tragedies of Mr Williams' case is that in 2019 he had been free for ten years, so he should have been referred for licence cancellation. It did not happen, and it is not clear why, but it may have been because no-one was actively looking at him given that his supervision had been suspended. In any event, the referral system did not work and Mr Williams was never referred, at any stage, for cancellation.

It seems to me that these two concerns at least give rise to a training need.

The MoJ/HMPPS now provides Introductory Suicide Prevention Training for probation staff developed in collaboration with the Zero Suicide Alliance (ZSA) which has been

available to all probation staff since September 2023. Over 1700 staff have now completed this training. Further comprehensive suicide prevention training is in the training development pipeline.

A 7 minute briefing on suicide prevention has been developed for Probation staff and is available on EQUIP, an electronic database of guidance and process maps. This draws attention to those serving IPP sentences.

Under the current engagement model between Health/ Justice/ NHS / Social Care teams the MOJ are working closely with other government departments to ensure prison leavers, including those serving IPP sentences, can access healthcare, drug treatment and support with securing employment and stable accommodation.

The MoJ/HMPPS has a current Suicide Prevention Action Plan within which one of the identified goals is to provide staff with the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to support good quality suicide prevention practice. As part of the refreshed probation learner offer, Probation Practitioners who manage IPP cases are provided with dedicated learning products aimed at increasing their knowledge and skills around trauma aware/person centred practice, as well as opportunities to practice motivational interviewing approaches. The Skills for Effective Engagement Development and Supervision (second generation) (SEEDS2) practitioner package, which is required learning for all Probation Practitioners who have been in post for at least six months, has motivational interviewing/relational practice as the core principle. The probation learner offer will be evaluated and reviewed in September 2024.

As part of an IPP Action Plan, HMPPS is drawing together a holistic staff IPP guide and series of practitioner briefing events which will promote HMPPS operational staff awareness of the IPP sentence and its impact on those subject to it. This guide and series of events will include a focus on recall.

Guidance for Probation staff on Consideration of the Suitability for Termination of IPP Licences was issued in September 2023 alongside a 7 Minute Briefing on Termination of IPP Licence and this is available to staff on EQUIP (as referred to above).

Alongside the learning and development/training being provided to Probation staff regarding suicide prevention and termination of IPP Licences, you may be aware that there are also proposed changes being taken forward in the Victims and Prisoners Bill which relate specifically to IPP sentences. These proposed new measures will

1. Reduce the qualifying period which triggers the duty of the Secretary of State to refer an IPP licence to the Parole Board for termination from ten years to three years;
2. Include a clear statutory presumption that the IPP licence will be terminated by the Parole Board at the end of the three-year qualifying period;
3. Introduce a provision that will automatically terminate the IPP licence two years after the three-year qualifying period, in cases where the Parole Board has not terminated the licence; and
4. Introduce a power to amend the qualifying period by Statutory Instrument

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention. I trust that this response provides assurance that action is being taken to address these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Director General of Operations