



HM Prison & Probation Service

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Mr I M Cartwright
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09 December 2024

Dear Mr Cartwright,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 14 October 2024, addressed to the Ministry of Justice, following the inquest into the death of Stephen Sleaford on 27 October 2022 at HMP Gartree. I am responding on behalf of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) as Director General of Operations.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Mr Sleaford's family, and I would first like 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.

Following evidence heard at the inquest, you have raised concerns regarding First Aid training for staff, the initial response of prison officers in medical emergency situations and the blocking of observation panels. Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

The HMPPS First Aid Policy Framework was re-issued nationally in August 2023. The revised policy highlights the training requirements for Emergency First Aid and First Aid in prisons, including the importance of Governors ensuring that there is an appropriate number of trained staff on duty at all times. To achieve this, a detailed local first aid risk assessment must be produced to determine the number of First Aiders at Work (FAW) and Emergency First Aiders at work (EFAW) required at an establishment at any given period, ensuring that they are deployed appropriately.

At HMP Gartree, the requirement is for the provision of 14 trained first aiders per week and there are currently 50 officers with in-date training. Further to this, there are a total of 95 prison staff currently trained in EFAW to fulfil the requirement of 42 per week. This is in addition to the provision of healthcare, which at HMP Gartree is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As such, healthcare staff are able to provide emergency assistance should the need arise.

In relation to First Aid training for all new officers, I would like to reassure you that Emergency First Aid is a mandatory requirement and delivered as part of the foundation

training syllabus that all new officers undertake. This training remains valid for three years and although not mandatory, staff are able to undertake refresher training to maintain their basic skills and keep up to date with any changes to first-aid procedures.

Additionally, First Aid Awareness training videos have been developed by the HMPPS Health and Safety Function in conjunction with St John Ambulance as a tool to promote awareness and refresh key elements of first aid for staff, in particular those staff who do not completely refresh the Emergency First Aid or First Aid at Work certified training packages. This is expected to be launched in November 2024.

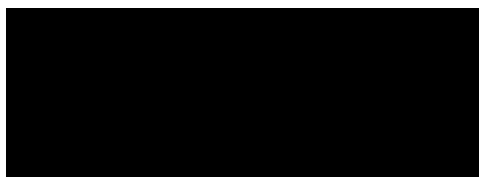
In respect of staff response in a medical emergency, HMP Gartree has issued a Notice to Staff reminding staff of the process of unlocking a cell at night when working alone and the need to take immediate action to preserve life. Staff were reminded of the need to immediately raise the alarm by calling a medical emergency response code and inform the control room of the exact location so staff, including healthcare staff, can respond. Before entering a cell alone staff must undertake a dynamic risk assessment, which includes assessing the situation in the cell (for example if there is more than one occupant), considering the condition of the prisoner, and any risk to the safety and security of the prison and themselves. If they consider it is safe to do so, staff must enter the cell immediately and take action to preserve life. In addition to the Notice to Staff, the requirements above will be reiterated via wing briefings and during the Governor's full staff briefing.

HMPPS recently issued a new film: 'Responding to emergency situations', designed to help staff to understand what they need to do when they find a prisoner who has ligatured. The film has been made available to all prisons and is targeted at all staff who have face-to-face contact with prisoners, including OSGs and staff completing night duties who may need to respond to a medical emergency. All new officers are shown the film during their foundation training and HMP Gartree intends to show it to groups of staff in briefing sessions.

In respect of prisoners blocking observations panels, a notice was re-issued to all staff in October 2024 reminding them of the importance of challenging prisoners who block their observation panels and setting out the process for doing so, which includes an escalation process where a prisoner continues to block their observation panel. All operational staff are now required to read and acknowledge their understanding of this process and this is retained by the respective line managers. Operational staff are also asked about their understanding of and knowledge of the correct procedure during their regular performance conversation with their line manager, as a performance expectation.

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

Yours sincerely

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Director General Operations