



HM Prison & Probation Service

Director General Operations
HM Prison and Probation Service
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Catherine Wood
Mid Kent and Medway Coroners' Service
Oakwood House
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16 January 2025

Dear Ms Wood,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 25 November 2024 following the inquest into the death of Jonathon Paul Lawlor at HMP Elmley on 19 October 2023. I am responding on behalf of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) as the Director General of Operations.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Mr Lawlor'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.

You have expressed a concern regarding the delivery of key worker sessions provided at HMP Elmley. Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

In January 2024 I wrote to all Area Executive Directors, Prison Group Directors and Governors setting out the HMPPS operational priorities for 2024/5 and the related core expectations. One of these priorities was to increase the quantity and quality of regimes, including key work, and to support this a new regime and business planning process has been introduced.

The core expectations for key work delivery are that prisons must utilise all their allocated resource for this task and that it must be profiled. Every prisoner must receive one key work session every four weeks as a minimum, and any remaining resources must be targeted at an enhanced offer for individual prisoners based on an assessment of risk, need and cohort prioritisation.

Local action is also underway. The Custodial Manager who oversees keywork at HMP Elmley has been compiling a Key Work Delivery Strategy to take forward as we move into 2025. This strategy details HMP Elmley's plan to address and improve the issue of key work within the establishment.

The goal is to ensure that all prisoners are allocated a dedicated key worker at the point they are moved from the induction unit to a permanent houseblock. These key workers will be staff from that particular houseblock to enable the building of better relationships between the staff member and prisoner and enable the prisoner to feel they have a trusted point of contact on the unit, giving them confidence to speak to their key worker about any sensitive subjects that may arise. For continuity, if after being allocated a key worker a prisoner is moved from one houseblock to another the key worker allocation will not change

HMP Elmley recognise that specific cohorts of prisoners are either more at risk of harm or self-harm or are more vulnerable than others to incidences such as bullying. To manage this risk certain staff members have been identified and will work specifically with these cohorts, the aim being to have these staff upskilled in the areas that they are allocated to so they can help these individuals and lower the: violence, self-harm, non-compliance and bullying rates within the establishment. We currently have a member of staff from each houseblock dedicated to young offenders with the aim of increasing these dedicated cohorts over the coming months. Additional key work is also offered to those that reside on our neurodiverse landing and key work is offered each weekend within the in-patient department (IPD) and the Care and Separation Unit (CSU).

Key work is one of the core priorities for HMPPS in 2025/26. The expectation will be that key work delivery will increase in this cycle of regime planning, aligned to each establishment Regime Management Plan. Additional elements have been added to the Regime Planning Template to enable establishments in their key work delivery.

For 2025/6 the minimum expectation for key work delivery will rise to two key work sessions every four weeks as a minimum.

I hope the measures outlined above provide you with reassurance that learning and appropriate action has been taken from the circumstances of Mr Lawlor's death.

Yours sincerely

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Director General Operations