



HM Prison &  
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5 February 2026

Dear Mr Stevens,

**REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS: MR OLIVER MULANGALA**

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 8 December 2025 following the inquest into the death of Oliver Mulangala at HMP High Down on 19 January 2024. I am providing the response on behalf of His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Mr Mulangala'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 raised concerns regarding the measures implemented to reduce the availability of illicit substances and mobile phones in prisons, the use of drones to convey illicit substances, and the statistical reporting of drug-related deaths within prisons in England and Wales.

HMPPS is aware of the available routes for contraband, such as drugs and mobile phones, to enter prisons and how they are influenced by factors such as security measures, geographical location and prisoner cohort. Due to this, our approach to conveyance is multi-faceted. In the 2025/2026 financial year, HMPPS is investing over £40m in physical security measures across 34 prisons, including £10m on anti-drone measures, such as window replacements, external window grilles and specialist netting in over 15 priority prisons.

HMPPS utilises multiple countermeasures and initiatives to tackle the conveyance of drugs and mobile phones into our prisons. For example, all adult male closed prisons are equipped with X-ray body scanners, which are used to detect and deter the internal concealment of

illicit items by prisoners. Additionally, all public sector prisons have been provided with trace detection equipment, which is used to identify the presence of drugs on physical items. Furthermore, 54 priority establishments have airport-style enhanced gate security to screen staff and visitors, including archway metal detectors, handheld wands, and X-ray baggage scanners.

HMPPS takes the threat of serious and organised crime incredibly seriously and we are working with other government departments to tackle organised criminals operating within the prison estate. The Crime in Prisons Taskforce has been established to work closely with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service to improve the amount of quality referrals made to the police and to increase prosecutions from crimes committed in prisons. The most serious crimes, including those where a mobile phone has been used to coordinate criminal activity or has been identified as belonging to a prisoner who is a high-risk offender, are also referred to the police in line with the Crime in Prisons Referral Agreement.

Additionally, HMPPS works closely with other law enforcement agencies, including the National Crime Agency, through established tasking arrangements and intelligence sharing protocols. Our headquarters teams provide targeted support to the most at-risk prisons, ensuring that local security strategies are informed by national intelligence and operational priorities.

As you have identified, one of the routes of entry for contraband is through the use of drones. HMPPS is committed to deterring, detecting and disrupting the illegal use of drones targeting prisons in England and Wales. Whilst we cannot share specific details on our counter-drone measures, as doing so would aid serious and organised criminals, please be assured that our approach is multi-faceted. This includes introducing physical security countermeasures, exploring technological developments, exploiting intelligence, strengthening legislation and working across government and with international partners on this global issue.

We also work closely with law enforcement organisations to tackle prisons being targeted by drones. The Director General of the National Crime Agency has directed police chiefs to work with HMPPS to jointly tackle the threat of drones. For example, there are 400m restricted fly zones around all closed prisons and Young Offender Institutions. These restrictions make all unauthorised drone incursions a crime and support police and prison staff to disrupt illegal drone use. Additionally, we have developed comprehensive guidance and are delivering upskilling to staff to improve the response to drone activity impacting our prisons. HMPPS also conducts vulnerability assessments across the estate to understand the risk so that we can develop and implement plans to mitigate the threat.

I have received assurance from the Governor of HMP High Down that they will continue working with both regional and national Drug Strategy and Security teams and that a meeting is being arranged for Spring 2026 to discuss existing policies and practices aimed at tackling

the conveyance of drugs, mobile phones, and the use of drones to assess what further actions can be taken to mitigate the risks.

With regard to the reporting of deaths in custody, we publish Official Safety in Custody Statistics quarterly, but do not have a specific category of 'drug-related' in those statistics. For administrative and statistical purposes our classification is by *apparent* cause of death. This has evolved specifically to help place reliable numbers of deaths in prison custody in the public domain without undue delay, and we do not use the category of 'drug-related' in published statistics because it is difficult to identify such cases accurately within the timescale required for our publications.

However, we do monitor such deaths closely and ensure that lessons are learned from them. All drug-related deaths are examined through our early learning review process, in which cases are reviewed by the group safety lead and the resulting report considered by the Governor, the Prison Group Director and the national Safety Group and Drug and Alcohol Group. And we study the outcomes of Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's reports and inquests in these cases very carefully and take action to address any recommendations and matters of concern that are reported.

In the published statistics deaths known to be drug-related are included either in the "self-inflicted: overdose" category or in the "other/non-natural" category, according to the circumstances of the case. However, the "other/non-natural" category also includes accidental deaths and the small proportion of deaths in which, even after all investigations have been concluded, the cause remains unknown, so it is not possible to derive a total figure for drug-related deaths.

In order to provide more specific data about drug-related deaths we worked with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on a 2023 publication which was produced by matching our deaths data with data from Coroner's reports: [Drug-related deaths and suicide in prison custody in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#). This showed that the risk of male prisoners dying from drug-related causes was similar to the general male population between 2008 and 2015, but was higher than the general male population between 2016 and 2019. Opiates were the most common drug type mentioned on death certificates, with methadone being the most common form. The second most common drug type was new psychoactive substances, which showed a particular increase in mentions between 2015 and 2019.

There is inevitably a considerable time lag before more definitive statistics of this type can be produced: the decision was taken for the 2023 publication to stop at 2019 because at the time the Coroner's data for later years was far from complete, reducing the quality of the results. We hope to collaborate with ONS again to provide a further version of this publication in the future. We also keep the contents of our Official Statistics under continuous review, to ensure their compliance with the three pillars of the Code of Practice for Statistics; trustworthiness, quality and value.

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

Yours sincerely,

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Interim Director General of Operations