



HM Prison &
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Sean Horstead
Area Coroner, for the Coroner Area of Essex
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6 March 2026

Dear Mr. Horstead,

REGULATION 28 REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS: MR STUART BERRY

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 12 January 2026, addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, The Ministry of Justice, HM Prison and Probation Service and HCRG. I am responding on behalf of HMPPS as the Interim Director General of Operations.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Mr. Berry'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 amount of time within national prison officer training dedicated to recognising and recording triggers, risk factors, and protective factors and the approach to understanding and addressing ligature-related considerations linked to window bars in Victorian or similar prison cells.

Recognition of the risks and triggers that may increase a prisoner's risk of suicide and self-harm is a vital skill for prison officers. The Safety Support Skills training within Foundation Training, formerly Prison Officer Entry Level Training (POELT), comprises approximately 18 hours of the overall curriculum and of this, the dedicated session on identifying and managing risk factors and triggers accounts for between 45 minutes to one hour of the training. The risks, triggers and protective factors module is currently under national review in collaboration with Prison Learning Design and Delivery (PLDD). While this work progresses, the National

Safety Group has developed interim upskilling sessions focused specifically on risk identification at the point of the prisoner's arrival in custody. These sessions will be delivered across the reception estate by the National Safety Group and Group Safety Leads, with completion anticipated by June 2026, subject to confirmation.

Further, a comprehensive review of the Reception Officer training has commenced, and the National Safety Group have already proposed enhancements that will strengthen risk-identification skills and improve support for individuals who may be particularly vulnerable during their early days in custody. The revised training will be completed once PLDD capacity allows.

Outside of foundation training we provide other training modules which comprehensively cover all areas of self-harm and suicide, including risks and triggers. These include the ACCT case review and assessor training, self-harm and suicide training and Investigating Concerns training.

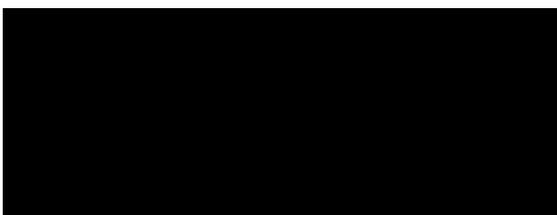
Nationally, we recognise that older cells can contain multiple potential ligature fixtures—including plumbing, furniture, and electrical fittings. HMP Chelmsford have submitted a local business case seeking to upgrade Victorian-style windows to anti-ligature designs.

The long-term solution is the redevelopment of cells to a fully ligature-resistant (LR) standard. Although newer prisons and refurbished wings are built to this specification, much of the estate predates the LR standard and does not currently include extensive LR provision. We are concluding a project to convert 50 cells across 13 locations, prioritised according to assessed levels of risk. This includes HMP Chelmsford, where four LR cells were completed in 2025. While LR cells are valuable, they are not always appropriate for individuals requiring constant supervision. In such cases, purpose-built constant-supervision cells offer greater visibility for staff, are the safer alternative, and several are already available at HMP Chelmsford. Subject to funding, we aim to increase the provision of LR cells nationally in the coming financial year.

It is important to note that LR cells alone cannot eliminate the risk of self-inflicted death. They must be used alongside other protective measures as identified in ACCT plans, observation levels, and supportive intervention. Where LR cells are unavailable, alternative safeguards remain essential and are frequently effective.

I hope this response provides assurance that HMPPS is actively addressing the issues raised in your report. We remain committed to improving early-days-in-custody safety, strengthening training, and reducing the risk of self-inflicted deaths across the prison estate.

Yours sincerely,



Interim Director General of Operations