



Ministry of JUSTICE

National Offender
Management Service

Mr Tom Osborne
HM Senior Coroner for Milton Keynes

Dear Mr Osborne,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 Report to Prevent a Future Death dated 8 August 2014 and addressed to Andrew Selous, Minister for Prisons, concerning the recent inquest into the death of Sean Robert Brock at HMP Woodhill on 10 November 2013. Your letter has been passed to Equality, Rights and Decency (ERD) Group, which forms part of the national Management Service (NOMS), as we have the policy responsibility for suicide prevention and self-harm management, and for sharing learning from deaths in custody. I am responding on behalf of NOMS.

In your report you raised your concern that a Governor's evidence reported that the number of prison officers at HMP Woodhill had been reduced by one third, and his concern that this would impact on prisoner safety and may put prisoner lives at risk.

HMP Woodhill is managed within the High Security estate and despite some reduction in staff numbers the current identified total staffing forecast includes an agreed complement of Officers that are necessary to provide safe decent and secure conditions. Included within the staffing forecast are staff specifically appointed to first night procedures, prison induction and safer custody work. HMP Woodhill has a Senior Manager who is responsible for safer prisons and equalities, and a Custodial Manager responsible for the management of safer custody procedures.

You may be aware that all public sector prisons have been subject to "benchmarking" which involved a team visiting each prison and benchmarking staff-to-prisoner ratios for a wing or for a workplace. This process required establishing a safe, decent and secure operating level in agreement with the governor and the senior team. Negotiations with staff associations were also held. HMP Woodhill received its "New ways of working" report in August this year. This report set out the agreed staffing headcount.

It is recognised that HMP Woodhill is currently experiencing a high number of vacancies across all grades. This is being addressed via local and national recruitment drives along with staff working at HMP Woodhill on detached duty.

I would like to reassure you that HMP Woodhill is working hard to ensure that key information is shared between prison staff and contractors in delivery of safety for all prisoners currently in its care and all staff are aware of the importance of safer custody.

I hope that you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

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20 October 2014