



# HM Prison & Probation Service

██████████  
**Director General Prisons**  
**HM Prison and Probation Service**  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London SW1H 9AJ  
██████████  
██

Mr Ian Brownhill  
Assistant Coroner  
Mid Kent and Medway Coroners  
Cantium House  
2nd Floor  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1XD

20 September 2021

Dear Mr Brownhill,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 25 May 2021 following the inquest into the death of James Devenny at HMP Elmley on 2 September 2019. I am informed there was an administrative error on our part for which I apologise and as such, I am grateful to you for granting an extension to the statutory deadline for my response.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with the family of Mr Devenny and I would 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 about individuals' direct access to the Samaritans phone line, and also that Prison Officers are not routinely briefed about individuals' previous self-harm in custody. Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention.

At the time of Mr Devenny's death, in-cell telephony had only recently been introduced at HMP Elmley, and there were initially some supply issues which meant that not all cells were equipped with the necessary handsets. These have now been resolved, and with the exception of those in the Care and Separation Unit (CSU) and Healthcare in-patients, all those in custody at HMP Elmley now have in-cell phones.

All people in custody across the prison estate are able to call Samaritans without charge using a pin number given out on induction and widely circulated around the prison. In the event that in-cell telephony is unavailable, individuals can also request the dedicated Samaritans phones that are held in each wing office and are taken to people in their cells. These phones have been updated, and the handsets are now bright green, as a visual association with the colours used by the Samaritans and to make them more visible to staff so that they can be quickly identified and provided once requested. These phones are programmed with only the Samaritans phone number and staff check them regularly to ensure that they are in full working order.

Your second concern is that prison officers are not routinely briefed about people who have previously significantly self-harmed in custody. While a knowledge of previous self-harm can be useful, and this information will be noted if it is available either on “National Offender Management Information System” the system used for information about those in custody, or disclosed by the individual in question, previous incidents will not always be relevant in identifying current risks and triggers. As HMP Elmley is a busy local prison with a high turnover of people in their care, there is a focus on recognising risk and triggers for self-harm and suicide and being alert to any changes in an individual which may indicate an increase in risk.

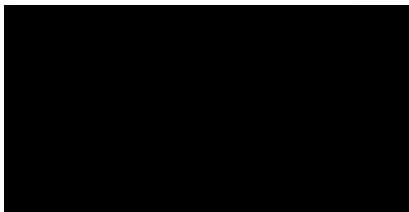
You will recall that evidence was given at the inquest about the updated version of Assessment Care in Custody and Teamwork version 6 (ACCT v6), which was due to be rolled out shortly after the inquest. I am pleased to confirm that ACCT v6 went live across the male estate in July 2021. Along with updates and improvements made to the ACCT document there is also an increased emphasis placed on up-skilling staff in relation to risk identification, and revised training modules and awareness materials have been made available to all staff at the prison.

The prison also now operates the Key Worker scheme, whereby all people in custody have a dedicated Key Worker who meets with them on a weekly basis. The intention of Key Work is to enable better relationships between staff and people in prison, and to support those in custody to settle into prison life. Key Workers are expected to be aware of an individual’s history and to work with them to help and support them with any issues. As part of this role key workers review National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS) case notes and look at any previous issues or risks, including self-harm. They are therefore well placed to recognise any changes in the level of an individual’s risk of self-harm or suicide and to be aware of any potential trigger dates which may indicate that an ACCT should be opened to provide increased support.

An updated safety diagnostic tool which provides information about individuals is available to all staff. This includes information on violence and self-harm, and other relevant information drawn from NOMIS. The tool makes it easier to access all relevant risk information in one place and is routinely used by safer custody staff who flag any new receptions and any individuals they are concerned about to wing staff and other relevant departments within the prison.

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

Yours sincerely,



Director General for Prisons