HM Prison & Probation Service

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Director General Prisons
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Mr Nicholas Leslie Rheinberg
Assistant Coroner
Room 226 County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QD

06 October 2021

Dear Mr Rheinberg,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 28 July 2021 following the inquest into the death of Carl Lee Walters at HMP Exeter on 30 March 2019. 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 Walters 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 the inquest, you have raised a concern in relation to the failure to preserve key evidence which could mean that dangerous conditions or circumstances go undiscovered. You point out that this raises the prospect that appropriate steps to avoid a similar tragedy are overlooked. I am grateful to you for bringing your concern to my attention.

As a consequence of Mr Walters' death and the discovery of HMP Exeter's deficiencies with regard to the preservation of key evidence, new measures and processes have been put in place to prevent similar circumstances in the future. In particular, HMP Exeter have created a local operating policy for deaths in custody, which contains a list of essential documents that must be retained and the required actions. Included within the list is the collation of relevant cell bell records, CCTV and Body Worn Video Camera footage of any incident. Also, since Mr Walters' death a new CCTV system has been installed which provides a more reliable source of footage.

In addition to the above, all deaths in custody at HMP Exeter are subject to a quick time learning review conducted by the Head of Safety and Regional Groups Safety Lead. This occurs within 72 hours of any apparent self-inflicted death taking place and as a result requires all pertinent information, including CCTV footage and cell bell records, to be made available and reviewed.

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

Yours sincerely

Director General for Prisons