



HM Prison & Probation Service

Director General Prisons
HM Prison and Probation Service
8th Floor Ministry of Justice
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Janine Wolstenholme
Coroner for West Yorkshire (Eastern)
6 Park Square
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS1 2LW

2 February 2022

Dear Ms Wolstenholme,

Thank you for your Regulation 28 report of 30 November 2021, addressed to the Ministry of Justice and the Governor of HMP Wakefield, following the inquest into the death of Connor Hoult on the 10 June 2019. I am responding as Director General of Prisons.

I know that you will share a copy of this response with Mr Hoult'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 expressed concern about the conduct and quality of prisoner checks at HMP Wakefield. I will endeavour to address your points of concern, however it may be helpful for me to first clarify the types of checks that staff are required to conduct on prisoners.

Roll checks are undertaken to ensure that all prisoners are present. They involve staff counting the number of prisoners in each area of the prison at particular times of the day, and taking any necessary action if there are any immediate concerns for a prisoner's welfare. Welfare checks are undertaken by staff during or shortly after unlock so they can assure themselves of the wellbeing of prisoners. This can include verbal or physical acknowledgements, movement in a cell or in bed, or any other indication that a person is alive.

Further, as part of the ACCT (Assessment, Care in Custody, Teamwork) process, welfare observations are carried out on those who are considered to be at risk of self-harm or suicide to ensure these individuals are safe. Observations will be carried out at irregular intervals and in the least obtrusive manner, particularly at night given the importance of sleep for wellbeing.

In January 2020, and in response to the PPO's investigation, HMP Wakefield issued a Governor's Order that set out the expectation that staff should obtain a verbal response from all prisoners who are or appear to be awake when conducting roll checks and unlocking procedures, to avoid waking sleeping prisoners overnight or early in the morning, while ensuring that potential concerns are identified.

Further, and in response to your concerns, the Governor of HMP Wakefield has now circulated a Notice to Staff reminding staff that they should assure themselves of the wellbeing of prisoners during or shortly after unlock. Additionally, your concerns will be discussed with the staff who gave evidence at the inquest to ensure they fully understand the process and their responsibilities during unlock, and know how to take action should they have any concerns about an individual's welfare.

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,

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the Director General of Prisons.

Director General of Prisons