



Home Office

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson
DBE MP
Minister of State for Policing, Fire
and Crime Prevention
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Ms Lynn Emslie
Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody
102 Petty France
7th Floor
London
SW1H 9AJ

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20 September 2024

Dear Ms Emslie,

Thank you for your letter of 24 July about the work of the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody (IAPDC), and I apologise for the delay in responding. This is an incredibly important issue, and I share your commitment to ensuring that police custody is a safe environment for all detainees, visitors and staff. I am extremely grateful to you and other members of the panel for your work to prevent deaths in custody and post-custody suicides.

Every death in police custody is a tragedy. The Government will do all it can to prevent deaths in custody and, together with the police and relevant agencies, deliver meaningful and lasting change. In the tragic instances that such deaths do occur, the Government is committed to ensuring transparency and accountability from organisations and improving support for bereaved families.

Thank you for your reflections on Right Care, Right Person (RCRP), which I will keep in mind. However, as you will be aware, it is for Chief Constables to decide whether to implement the scheme, the speed of implementation and how much of the framework set out in the National Partnership Agreement and supporting guidance they wish to adopt, following engagement with health and other partners. Policing leaders will need to consider the principles of RCRP and decide how best to adopt this locally. Chief Constables continue to have access to guidance available through the College of Policing and ongoing support from the NPCC Implementation Team who are also working with coroners to monitor any reports of deaths during or following police contact where RCRP may be a factor. To date, there have been none that they or we are aware of in which RCRP was material to the outcome.

On 12 July, the Lord Chancellor announced a package of measures aimed at addressing prison capacity, which included a change to the automatic release point for those serving standard determinate sentences from 50% to 40%. There will be important exclusions for serious violent offences with a sentence of four years or more, sex offences, certain domestic abuse-connected offences, and national security offences, with a commitment to revisit the change in 18 months; and developing a 10-year capacity strategy on how prisons can be built quicker by unblocking the planning system and enacting wider system reform. The Ministry of Justice supports opportunities to divert children at an earlier stage

in the youth justice system in order to facilitate early education and rehabilitation. And as part of the Government's knife crime action plan, I will prioritise early intervention to stop young people being drawn into crime.

I look forward to working in consultation with the IAPDC to build on key themes and address emerging ways to prevent further deaths in or following custody, including priority areas of mental health and risk, reducing apparent post-custody suicides, and embedding learning.

My officials will continue to prioritise this important issue, and I will ask my office to arrange a meeting with yours so we can discuss this in more detail.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to me and I hope this response is reassuring.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diana Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'D' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention

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