Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Detention

Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Detention

Meeting Minutes – 14 October 2026, for publication

Attendees

Wendy Sinclair-Gieben
Kate Eves
Seena Fazel
Jake Hard
Andrew Harris

Adrian Usher (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman), for item 2

Item 1. Minutes and actions from last meeting

1. The Panel approved the previous meeting minutes.
2. Members reviewed outstanding actions, including discussions on prison deaths data and potential research opportunities. It was agreed that further discussions would take place on prison deaths data. The Panel also received an update on an ongoing PhD project examining environmental factors associated with self-harm in HMP Wandsworth, Pentonville and Bronzefield.
3. The Panel noted the need to continue considering the MHA Independent Investigations follow-up report and business case for change. Changes to senior leadership and Ministerial responsibilities had delayed progress. The Panel discussed future engagement with relevant Ministers regarding its report and recommendations.
4. The Panel received an update on access to records of inquest. Members noted that there is currently no formal mechanism for routine access and discussed the practical and legislative challenges associated with obtaining records. The Panel considered options for improving access to information, including exploring a sample of cases and supporting wider access to records of inquest for learning purposes.

Item 2. Adrian Usher: discussion of lessons learned from deaths in detention and areas of shared concern

5. The Panel received an update on the PPO's learning priorities and ongoing work to reduce self-inflicted deaths in custody, including its "48/90" initiative focused on the early stages of custody. Members discussed information sharing, risk assessment and management, environmental factors, staff training, compassionate release processes, and opportunities to improve learning from deaths in detention. The Panel also considered the importance of consistent clinical reviews and effective collaboration between organisations involved in investigating deaths in custody.

Item 3. Data Dashboard and workplan discussion

Dashboard

6. The Panel reviewed dashboard data on compassionate release and discussed emerging trends and issues. Members considered the role of medical evidence, risk assessment and decision-making processes in compassionate release cases, including the impact of age, frailty and ill health on assessments of risk.
7. The Panel also discussed future priorities for its work, including transitional risk and vulnerabilities, risk recognition, and information sharing. Members agreed that these should remain distinct areas of focus while recognising the links between them.
8. The dashboard highlighted opportunities for further analysis and learning, including mental health, natural deaths in detention and drug-related deaths. The Panel discussed how further evidence and data could support future work in these areas.

IAPDD Workplan update

Mental health investigations:

9. The Panel discussed progress on its work relating to independent investigations of deaths in mental health detention. Members considered options for future oversight and investigation arrangements and noted ongoing research examining themes arising from deaths in mental health detention. The Panel also discussed engagement with relevant oversight bodies and opportunities to support future learning and improvement.

Use of lethal force during arrest:

10. The Panel received an update on the report into the use of lethal force during arrest. The report is being finalised and will be shared with stakeholders for comment ahead of publication.

PFD tracker:

11. The Panel received an update on the Prevention of Future Deaths tracker

National Custody Risk assessment and National Custody Conference:

12. The Panel received an update on planned external engagement activities, including participation in the National Custody Risk Assessment process and sharing learning from the use of force report at the National Police Chiefs' Custody Conference.

Urgent care in immigration detention:

13. The Panel will keep a watching brief of this work.

Support for bereaved families:

14. The Panel received an update on its work to support bereaved families. Members discussed emerging findings from engagement with coroners, family liaison staff and secure health settings, including opportunities to identify and promote good practice. The Panel also discussed plans for future engagement activities and the importance of ensuring that learning reflects experience across all UK jurisdictions.

Item 4. Panel and Board priorities ahead of next Board meeting

15. The Panel received an update on arrangements for the next Ministerial Board meeting and discussed opportunities to strengthen engagement with Ministers and senior officials.

16. The Panel highlighted the important contribution of the Expert Stakeholder Group in advancing work on its priority areas: transitional risks and vulnerabilities, risk recognition, and information sharing. This work may include short-life working groups and gap analyses to inform discussions with senior officials and contribute to the next Board meeting..

Item 5. Panel governance discussion

Member responsibilities

17. The Panel reviewed member responsibilities and discussed future priorities, including mental health parity, reviewing previous Panel reports, and opportunities to incorporate lived experience into future work.

Associate member proposal

18. The Panel discussed proposals for accessing additional specialist expertise to support its work and address identified gaps in knowledge and experience. Members considered how expert advice could be drawn on flexibly to inform specific projects and areas of work, and agreed that further proposals would be developed for consideration.
19. The Panel discussed that it would particularly benefit from expertise in police work and lived experience, with the latter provided by mechanisms being developed as part of the Ministerial Board on Deaths in Detention's Expert Stakeholder Group.

Research capacity

20. The Panel discussed its research and analytical capacity and considered options for supporting future research activity. Members noted the importance of ensuring sufficient capacity to deliver the Panel's work programme and research priorities.

Lived experience

21. The Panel discussed opportunities to strengthen lived experience input across its work including making greater use of the Expert Stakeholder Group and engaging relevant organisations and individuals on specific topics. Members highlighted the value of lived experience perspectives in informing recommendations, challenging assumptions and improving understanding of experiences across detention settings.
22. The Panel agreed to continue engaging with organisations, networks and individuals with relevant lived experience to help inform future work and priorities. The Panel agreed to continue the mapping exercise of organisations and networks with lived experience links and invited members to identify additional contacts for inclusion

---

Item 6. Discussion of impact of environment on deaths in detention

23. The Panel discussed the impact of physical and social environments on people in detention and considered how environmental factors may influence wellbeing, self-harm and deaths in detention. Members explored learning from different custodial settings and discussed factors including prison design, infrastructure and living conditions.
24. The Panel agreed that further work should explore the relationship between detention environments and outcomes for people in custody, including the potential impact of prison conditions and rising temperatures.

Item 7. AOB

Proposed project on drug-related deaths in prison

25. The Panel discussed drug-related deaths in prison as a potential future area of work. Members considered current evidence, emerging trends and opportunities to improve understanding of drug-related mortality in custodial settings and following release from custody.

26. The Panel agreed that further scoping work should be undertaken to assess the available evidence, identify knowledge gaps and determine whether further research is warranted.

IAPDD recruitment update

27. The Panel received an update on recruitment for a new Panel member and ongoing staffing arrangements within the Secretariat.

IAPDD budget update

28. The Panel received an update on the IAPDD budget and noted current expenditure and planned commitments in support of ongoing projects and work programme priorities.

Actions

- **Action 1: Secretariat to arrange a meeting between the Panel and DHSC DD.**
- **Action 2: Secretariat to follow up with University of Liverpool to get further information about their pharmacology database work as the precursor to a potential AI database for the Panel.**
- **Action 3: Secretariat to consult the Expert Stakeholder Group on relevant journals subscriptions and explore associate costs.**
- **Action 4: Jake Hard and Andrew Harris to meet separately to discuss prison deaths data.**
- **Action 5: Secretariat to explore whether an MOU or formal process for sharing PPO investigation material with the Panel would be feasible.**
- **Action 6: Adrian Usher to provide the Panel with a briefing on the PPO's "48/90" approach and associated learning.**
- **Action 7: Secretariat to include year-on-year AI trend analysis in future dashboard updates.**
- **Action 8: Panel to consider whether a future ESG discussion – or a discussion in some other format as appropriate – on risk recognition and the current evidence base would be beneficial.**
- **Action 9: Panel to write to Minister McGovern regarding the need to follow up the Panel's report on mental health investigations.**
- **Action 10: Andrew Harris and Sam Osian to complete and submit their proposal on themes arising from mental health detention deaths for Panel consideration.**
- **Action 11: Subject to Andrew Harris's approval, Secretariat to circulate an embargoed copy of the Use of Lethal Force report to stakeholders for comment prior to publication.**
- **Action 12: Secretariat to liaise with Sam Osian for final edits to the PFD reports tracker and to organise a teaching session or recorded dashboard demonstration.**
- **Action 13: Secretariat to notify Simon Barnes of Andrew Harris and Seena Fazel's attendance at the National Custody Risk Assessment and arrange travel as required.**

- **Action 14: Kate Eves to continue engagement with other UK jurisdictions to inform a potential second phase of the family liaison and good-practice work.**
- **Action 15: Secretariat to seek meetings with the Prisons Minister, Mental Health Minister, and Policing Minister to discuss the Panel's priorities and strengthen ministerial engagement.**
- **Action 16: Secretariat to send correspondence to Ministers setting out the Panel's role, current projects and priorities, and concerns about Board delays, if delays to Board continue.**
- **Action 17: Secretariat to plan a December meeting of the Expert Stakeholder Group to develop further work on the Panel's three priority areas.**
- **Action 18: All Panel members to provide a five-minute update at the next meeting on their recent work, key findings and upcoming activities, and to identify potential areas for future work, including mental health parity and review of existing IAPDD reports.**
- **Action 19: Panel/Secretariat to update the member responsibilities chart to include external meetings, events and representation activities undertaken by Panel members.**
- **Action 20: Secretariat to continue the mapping exercise of organisations, networks and contacts that can provide lived experience input across detention settings. Panel members to share any additional relevant organisations or contacts with Secretariat for inclusion in the stakeholder mapping and contact list.**
- **Action 21: Secretariat to continue exploring options for accessing specialist expertise, including police custody, operational delivery and human rights expertise, through associate members, commissioned work or stakeholder engagement arrangements.**
- **Action 22: Secretariat to compile a list of publications and references, starting with research on suicides in custody, for the evidence-register spreadsheet. Seena Fazel to provide a list of useful publications.**
- **Action 23: Secretariat to explore a future Expert Stakeholder Group discussion on the impact of prison environments, including heat and building temperatures, on health, wellbeing and deaths in detention.**
- **Action 24: Jake Hard to develop a proposal on drug-related deaths in prison and circulate it to the Panel for consideration, and Secretariat to check in with him as to what assistance needed.**

Date of next meeting: 15 December 2026, 13:00–17:00 (**in person** with Teams option available).