



IAPDC

PSG NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2022



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iap@justice.gov.uk



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FOREWORD FROM OUR CHAIR, JULIET LYON

The Summer newsletter starts with a call for your help and advice. The Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody (IAPDC) knows how privileged we are to have recourse to, and support from, such an expert group of practitioners and stakeholders. Without exception everyone is committed to, and engaged in, preventing deaths, natural or self-inflicted, in all forms of state custody. We need you to draw on your knowledge and experience so that the government's new ten year suicide prevention strategy has an evidence-based, ambitious and specific focus on preventing deaths in custody.

We share a responsibility to alert and advise Ministers about risk to life - whether in relation to rising remand numbers and reduced staffing levels in the prison system; avoidable police deaths at the point of arrest or immediately after arrest and charge; or Rwanda immigration proposals that do not take proper account of the obligation to protect lives. We have the capacity to support and encourage the development of community sentences with treatment requirements; refine efforts in the Draft Mental Health Bill to prevent police and prison custody being misused as places of safety; and the foresight to introduce safety or mental health impact assessments into government decision-making. Keeping people safe is a good, shared single objective.



Gone Fishing, HM Prison Humber, 2020. Image courtesy of Koestler Arts.



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SUICIDE PREVENTION - CALL FOR YOUR HELP AND ADVICE

As many Practitioner and Stakeholder Group (PSG) members will know, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) recently completed a consultation on its ten year plan to improve mental health, which will in turn inform a new ten year national suicide prevention strategy. The IAPDC is working with DHSC to focus on protecting the lives of people held in all forms of state custody or in contact with the criminal justice system.

The panel is taking the lead to ensure that the new suicide prevention plan draws on your expertise and knowledge and the experience of people who have attempted suicide or who have been bereaved by a death by suicide. We have begun consultation with partners, Inside Time and the Samaritans, to reach out to people detained in custody and to Listeners.

Can we call on you please to put forward your views, research findings and recommendations, policy and operational advice on priorities for protecting lives and preventing suicide in custody. What do you want to see included in the plan? What are your top priorities? How can we make sure that progress is measured, and action taken?



Please respond to us via iap@justice.gov.uk by 20 September



Dream 1, River House, image courtesy of Kessler Arts.

DRAFT MENTAL HEALTH BILL - NEXT STEPS

The House of Commons and the House of Lords have established a Joint Committee to examine the Government's recently published Draft Mental Health Bill. The Bill aims to reform the safeguards for, and support received by, detained patients. It follows the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act conducted by Sir Simon Wessely. The IAPDC responded to the consultation on the Government's White Paper, urging it to meet its commitment to end the use of prisons and police custody as 'places of safety' for people in mental health crisis and where their lives might be placed at risk.

We are now looking to provide further evidence to inform Parliament's pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill, with a focus on protecting lives. We want to make sure the Bill does all it can to protect people detained under the Mental Health Act, and that the views of those with lived experience, families and health and justice professionals are taken into account. The Committee's deadline for responses is 16 September 2022.



The panel welcomes correspondence via iap@justice.gov.uk



SUPPORTING PRISONS AND PRISONERS TO COPE WITH THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19

As many PSG members are aware, on 8 April 2022, the IAPDC sent a joint letter – co-signed by the heads of Royal Medical Colleges, staff associations and unions, scrutiny bodies, and health and justice charities – to the previous Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, calling for additional mental health support and health checks for prisoners in recognition of the impact of severely restricted regimes imposed in the face of the pandemic.

On 27 May, both Secretaries of State responded, outlining ongoing work to provide physical and mental healthcare and support for frontline health and justice staff. However no additional support or resources were offered to ameliorate the effects and risks of such extreme imprisonment – the adverse conditions, limited time out of cell and short staffing which pertain in many establishments today.

In July, UserVoice and Queen’s University Belfast published ‘Coping with Covid in Prisons’, a report drawing extensively on the lived experience of people in prison which found that the period of prolonged solitary confinement across the prison estate as a result of Covid significantly increased levels of anxiety and depression, with mental health screening scores almost five times higher than the standard for the general population.

Following discussion with HMPPS and NHS officials and prison visits this Summer, in September the IAPDC will advise Health and Justice Secretaries to ensure that additional mental health support and physical and mental health checks are offered to people who have endured poor conditions and treatment for so long.



View the Coping with Covid video above, which features accounts by prisoners and reflections from others including IAPDC chair Juliet Lyon. More information on Covid in custody here.



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FEELING THE HEAT

In July, the panel wrote to the Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who led the government's emergency response to the recent heatwave. Prior to the COBRA meeting he chaired, we advised Kit Malthouse that active steps should be taken to protect the lives of detained people during July's record breaking temperatures. As PSG members know, custodial settings are most often poorly ventilated environments with limited access to fresh air, few ways to keep cool and stifling conditions in some court cells making them dangerous places in increasingly extreme weather.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster[LJ1] responded to the letter on 17 August 2022, outlining the guidance shared with custodial settings such as prison health services to identify and support people with vulnerabilities at greater risk from the impact of heatwaves. The IAPDC is discussing with Phil Copple, director general of the prison service, what more can be done to improve ventilation, lower temperatures in establishments and keep people safe.

[LJ1]PI add link



Apple for Eve!, HM Young Offender Institution Cookham Wood, 2020. Image courtesy of Koestler Arts.

RWANDA: GOVERNMENT IMMIGRATION PROPOSALS

The Home Secretary has responded to an IAPDC letter sent on 10 June about the Government's plan for immigration processing in Rwanda. In our official request for clarification, the panel sought confirmation of accountability for safety and the steps to be taken to protect the lives of people detained in state custody in the UK, in the period from arrival and first detention, during transit and on arrival in Rwanda.

The IAPDC continues to have concerns about how people with disabilities and physical and mental health needs will be safeguarded as they are considered for removal to Rwanda, as well as their legal protections under Article 2 if they are transferred and relocated there. We are now raising specific concerns about risk to life with the Home Office.



UPCOMING THIS AUTUMN

Making the best use of Coroners' Prevention of Future Deaths Reports

As part of our continued work exploring how prevention of future deaths (PFD) reports by coroners can be better used to share learning and reduce deaths in custody, the IAPDC, supported by the Chief Coroner's office, is convening two roundtables in August and September with a representative group of coroners from England and Wales.

The roundtables will explore coroner's thoughts on the purpose of PFD reports, how the drafting, publication, and distribution of reports can be improved, and how learning from reports can be maximised.

Following the roundtables, coroner's feedback will be reflected in an IAPDC report in November with recommendations focusing on ensuring PFD reports are better utilised to meet their primary obligation of preventing further deaths.

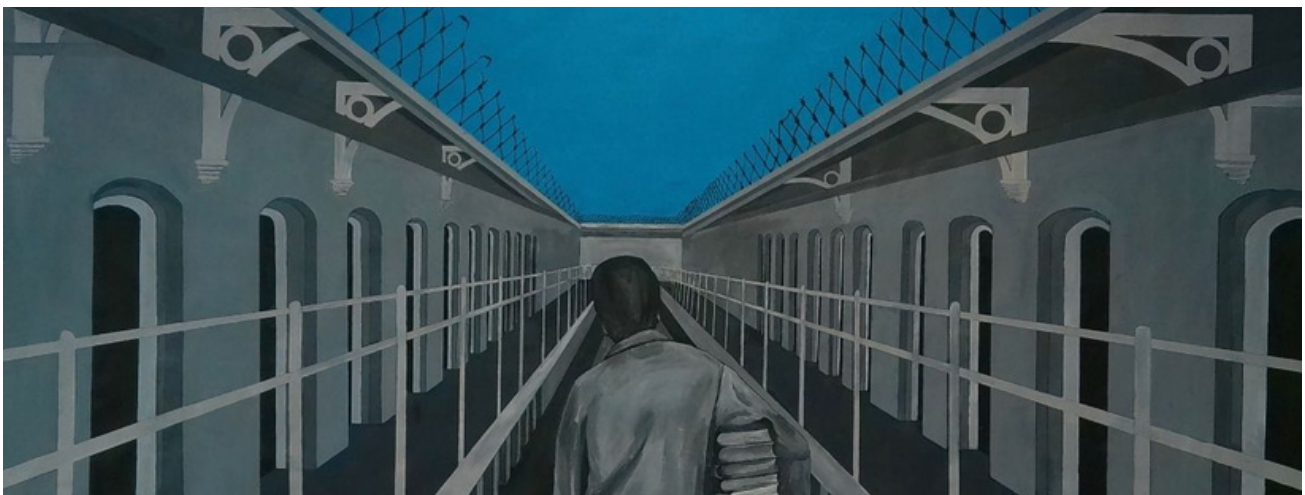
Preventing deaths in police custody

A new IAPDC report on police custody deaths will be published on 8 September. Preventing deaths at the point of, during, and after police custody sets out a range of local, adaptable initiatives that work to prevent police custody deaths. Drawn from responses received from 28 police and crime commissioners (PCCs), as well as chief constables and representative policing organisations, the report highlights positive examples across areas such as mental health and risk, apparent post-custody suicide, support needed after arrest and charge, and embedding learning. It aims to reduce deaths by sharing good practice among and between police forces.

On the day of publication, IAPDC chair, Juliet Lyon, has been invited to address delegates at the police custody conference - an event bringing together key policing partners, including PCCs, to promote shared understanding and learning, including learning from deaths relating to police contact. Notice of, and a link to, this new report will be sent to all PSG members.

An important opportunity: Churchill Fellowships on suicide prevention

Applications for the Churchill Fellowship open on 13 September across a range of themes which include the third and final year of its inspiring programme on suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. Projects related to the prevention of suicide and self-harm in any setting, including custody are welcome. This is a tremendous opportunity to experience and draw directly from ground-breaking work overseas and to bring back and share the learning here in the UK.



Tap Dancer, HM Prison Low Moss, 2021. Image courtesy of Koestler Arts.



IAPDC FREEPOST

The IAPDC continues to welcome correspondence to Freepost IAP from people detained in custody and their families about how best to prevent deaths and keep people safe. This valuable resource helps to inform and frame the Panel's advice and recommendations to ministers and senior leaders.



We are looking for new members to join the IAPDC Practitioner and Stakeholder Group. The Panel is encouraging practitioners from a range of organisations, particularly mental health settings, as well as families to join the group. If you know anyone who would be suitable, please ask them to join [here](#).

OTHER IAPDC UPDATES

The panel meets every six weeks to discuss progress against various workstreams undertaken by each panel member. You can view all meeting minutes [here](#). You can read the panel's latest media contributions [here](#).

DEATHS IN CUSTODY DATA

In the 12 months to June 2022, there were **288** deaths in prison custody. This is calculated at a rate of **3.6** per 1,000 prisoners. This is a reduction of 27% from 407 deaths in the previous 12-month period.

Of the 288 deaths, **66** were self-inflicted, a decrease of 20% on 82 deaths in the previous 12 months. During the same period, **189** deaths were due to natural causes, a decrease of 33%.

The number of Covid deaths in prison also reached **200**, with three further deaths attributed to Covid in June (and 23 so far this year).

The IAPDC is renewing efforts to encourage the DHSC to produce accurate data on deaths of people detained in secure healthcare to include information on race and gender.



Dirty Old Town, HM Prison Edinburgh, 2021. Image courtesy of Koestler Arts.