

Keeping Safe

IAP in collaboration with Inside Time / February 2020

You spoke, they listened!



Juliet Lyon

Everyone wants to turn the tide of suicide and self-harm in our jails. This special report by Inside Time shows how people in prison are part of the painstaking work to prevent harm and death. Things were at their worst in 2016 when tragically 112 men and 12 women took their own lives in prison custody in England and Wales - and last month the charity Inquest branded the death toll in British prisons as “a national scandal”, after their report said there were six deaths and nearly two suicides every week inside British jails in 2019.

Three years ago, in February 2017, the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody (IAP) and Inside Time began working together to help keep people in prison safe. Supported by the Samaritans, the IAP called on Inside Time readers to tell us how best to prevent suicide and self-harm. We promised to make sure that those with power to change things heard from you - and what you said counted.

Clear solutions

Your response was brilliant - we heard from over 150 prisoners across 60 prisons in England and Wales as well as from four Scottish prisons and a secure hospital. We also heard from prisoners' families in the North East via the charity

Nepacs. We heard from Samaritan Listeners, Insiders and Peer Mentors who day in day out help other prisoners in distress. We heard from people who had felt hopeless and desperate who explained what had helped them to cope. All offered clear solutions and shared our determination to keep people safe.

Prison staff

More of you wrote or phoned about relations with staff than anything else; the damaging impact of staff cuts, exhaustion, low morale, loss of experienced staff, no time to talk and more lock-up. There were some inspiring accounts of where someone's life had been saved by the humanity and compassion of an officer. And some very troubling ones about being laughed at, disrespected and, in a couple of cases, goaded to harm yourselves. The need for enough good, decent staff shone out.

Mental health

Almost half of your letters and phone messages were about mental health. “Jail is not a mental hospital. Well it shouldn't be. But it is at present.” Alongside calls for prompt assessment and diversion or transfer into treatment, solutions offered included listening, counselling, peer support, correct medication, increased exercise and activity, better emergency response and ensuring that the ACCT process (Assessment, Care in Custody, and Teamwork) is more than just a box-ticking exercise.

Families matter

You stressed the importance of family contact and support in preventing suicide and self-harm. Proposed improvements included being located closer to home, in cell telephones and internet access. Some people were under particular pressure. One man serving an IPP sentence wrote, “I don't see any light at the end of the tunnel.” Another wrote: “This is nothing but torture of the highest order.” Many of you live in fear of “the epidemic called Spice” and the debts and violence that go with it, too often feeling that “the dealers have the upper hand.” Ministers are being asked in the strongest terms to get to grips both with this unjust lingering sentence and with unsafe and unhealthy prison environments.

What's happened so far and what happens next?

The government has a duty to hold people safely in custody and to take active steps to protect life. In December 2017 the IAP published a detailed briefing showing how your recommendations are underpinned by those made by, amongst others, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, the Chief Coroner and the National Audit Office. Since then your insights and solutions have been discussed with Health and Justice Ministers, officials, governors and staff, presented as evidence in Parliament and profiled in the media. Our report on preventing the deaths of women in custody, informed by 60 women across 10 prisons and 45 health and justice professionals, has already led to marked regime improvements and a commitment to implement all our recommendations as part of the female offender strategy.

Now this Inside Time special report shows how people in charge of prison and probation services (HMPPS) and Justice and Health departments have listened and responded to your Keeping Safe recommendations, progress made and work still to do.

Keeping on Keeping Safe

At the outset we promised that ‘Keeping Safe’ was not a one-off. We know that you need to see more than just words on a page and instead experience real change and improvements in safer custody. This report shows that together we can prevent suicide in prison. A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed so far.

And, yes, there is more to do. Progress is unbearably slow. Safer custody is back as a priority for Ministers and remains so for managers. There is a pressing need for good, consistent leadership and clear accountability. How much better to be wise before the event and keep people safe than have to promise yet again to learn lessons after a tragic death in a bleak prison cell.

Meeting mental health needs and improving wellbeing

“Jail is not a mental hospital. Well, it shouldn't be. But it is at present.”

You said

Very many (45%) of your letters and phone messages were about mental health. Some of you asked why people who are mentally ill, those with learning disabilities and people suffering from dementia are in prison at all. You said some prison staff viewed prisoners struggling with mental health issues as ‘attention seekers’, ‘time wasters’ or ‘troublemakers’, rather than vulnerable people requiring help or health-care. One prisoner noted that it can take up to three months to be assessed by the mental health team.

Staffing levels need to be improved to ensure prisoners' access to NHS services inside and outside prison. A number of you proposed therapeutic group work, counselling, and mentoring/befriending. One man wrote: “I've had cause to applaud the Government's recognition of mental health wellbeing issues, none more so than the recognition of PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] in ex-service personnel.”

There were worries about life on release: “How can you prioritise your physical or mental health when you have nowhere to sleep, no job, no support network and £46 in your pocket?”

Many of you said that the way to improve mental health treatment and wellbeing is by:

- Focussing on preventative work and diversion into treatment;
- Ensuring a timely response by trained mental health teams including appointed counsellors and introducing mental health awareness and emergency response training for all staff;
- Tailoring drug treatment, maintenance and detox to needs of individuals.

Health and Justice responded

Liaison and diversion services, which place clinical staff in police stations and courts to assess and refer people to treatment and support, are operating across 92% of England.

Improving physical and mental health treatment of people in prison is a top priority for us. In October 2019, health and justice partners published a set of principles confirming our commitment to providing a standard of healthcare in prisons at least equivalent to that available in the community. In April 2018, new mental health and substance misuse service specifications were introduced by NHS England with a ‘no wrong door’ approach to enable access to services for those who need them.

We are piloting a £9 million joint prison and health-funded Drug Recovery Prison (DRP) pilot at HMP Holme House. The pilot aims to reduce the supply and demand for drugs and promote recovery from substance misuse. Early results show improved stability and safety of the prison environment.

What next?

Liaison and diversion services will be available across the country by 2020. After a successful pilot of community sentence treatment requirements in five areas, the programme to improve access to mental health and substance misuse services for offenders is being expanded. Action is being taken by the probation service and the NHS. Mental health in prison is under scrutiny in 2020 with attention from Parliamentary committees, royal colleges of medicine, health and justice inspectorates, PPO, Chief Coroner, NAO, Magistrates Association, PGA, POA, IAP and voluntary organisations.



Prison staff and the need for humane treatment

“A mantra for all prison staff, old and new, should be put in place and hammered home once and for all; people are sent to prison AS a punishment and not TO BE punished.”

You said

To prevent suicide and self-harm in prison, above all you called for enough decent staff who would know, support and respect the prisoners in their care. “People like one particular officer who can tell just by talking to me how my mood is. He notices if I am down, if I don’t eat, if I don’t socialise”.

Whereas in some prisons: “From what I have seen staff rush around, giving little time to anything or anyone.” - “It should not come as a pleasant surprise when an officer says ‘hello’ and asks you how you are!” - “I continue to feel unheard and out of sight out of mind.”

“Some staff do a decent job, others undo all the good work with nasty attitudes and personal axes to grind.” - “I hope this letter shows the frustration I feel. The prison officers need help too.”

HMPPS responded

We have invested £100 million in recruiting additional prison officers. At the end of September 2019, there were around 22,500 full-time

Many of you said, the way to improve prisoner /staff relations is by:

- Establishing and maintaining safe staff/prisoner ratios and staffing levels in all prisons;
- Selecting, recruiting and retaining good, decent people who treat prisoners with humanity and respect and show common sense;
- Supporting, training and supervising staff to meet national and international human rights standards.

equivalent prison officers. This is over 4,500 more than the same point in 2016.

These improved staffing levels are helping us roll out the key worker scheme, starting in closed prisons in the adult men’s estate. All residential officers in these prisons are being assigned key worker duties to support around six prisoners each, with 1-1 time each week to do so. Key work has now started in all 92 male

closed prisons and over 50 prisons are consistently delivering regular key work sessions to most prisoners. Implementing the key worker scheme is one of our top priorities because the evidence tells us this will improve safety and rehabilitation in prisons.

We are reforming our training programme for new prison officers, and existing officers are receiving new training in key areas such as mental health and substance misuse. Over 25,000 new and existing prison staff (including those who work for other organisations within prisons) have now completed at least one module of the revised suicide and self-harm prevention training, and 14,000 staff have received all six modules.

What next?

For governors and other prison managers, HMPPS is providing training in rehabilitative leadership. The Ministry of Justice is piloting a safety impact assessment, developed by the IAP, which means that proposed policy or budget changes would be assessed for their impact on prisoner and staff safety.

Making better use of Assessment, Care-in-Custody and Teamwork (ACCT)

“I’ve been inside for 25 years. I’ve been a self-harmer. I’ve tried to commit suicide a number of times. And I think the way they should deal with it is by giving us the right treatment, the right therapy and actually having some respect for people who’ve self-harmed”.

You said

Although the intention of ACCT is to safeguard prisoners, many prisoners felt it had become more of a ‘box ticking exercise’. “ACCT is clearly being used as a defensive observations tool rather than to provide team working and care”. “Having a torch shone in your face every hour...led to massive sleep deprivation which only makes your desperation worse.” You said focus on the people involved: “ACCT needs to address the reasons behind mental health, not just monitor those on suicide watch”. - “Basically [what’s needed is] less paperwork for the staff to do and a bit more time for them to give to people with issues”.

You said that better use could be made of ACCT by:

- Examining if ACCT has become a box-ticking exercise and focusing on making it more meaningful and effective;
- Increasing the involvement of prisoners, mental health professionals and family members in the ACCT process;
- Ensuring care maps are established, regularly reviewed and followed through.

HMPPS responded

Following your feedback, we ran a wide-scale consultation on the ACCT process. From this, we created a Safety Support Plan for people at risk to use. We encouraged more engagement with family and other sources of support. We improved the design and format of the ACCT document, making it easier for staff to complete. This means they can spend less time on paperwork and more time with individuals at risk. We provided clear direction about where in the process contributions from others (including healthcare staff, family members, key worker) are required and beneficial. We developed a quality checking process to ensure that all ACCT documents are completed effectively, and don’t just become a ‘tick-box’ exercise. Over the past year, we have trialled these changes in 9 prisons and one immigration removal centre.

What next?

There is a lot of stigma around self-harm across the prison community, and HMPPS heard during the trial that prisoners still did not feel as involved in the ACCT process and their care planning as they could be. Families could and should be more involved. The improved ACCT will be rolled out across the prison estate throughout 2020. HMPPS recognises the need for support to extend beyond the ACCT document itself. In 2020, there will be more emphasis on improving awareness and understanding of how to support individuals at risk, for both staff and prisoners and new guidance and training for staff.

Improving incentives and earned privileges

“Prison officers must be discouraged from bullying prisoners but instead treat them as fellow human beings. Often prisoners are treated with contempt and bullied with IEP warnings for the most trivial reasons, and often end up on a Basic Regime for 30 days or more. This causes depression and can lead to suicide.”

You said

Many felt that the IEP system is often arbitrary and unjust: “Prisoners who have earned enhanced status are being denied it and the rewards that go with it.”

“All it takes is a screw to dislike you and you’re on Basic.”

“This IEP system is not good. Prisoners are receiving negative entries for self-harming.”

Some of you spoke of your frustration that weekly pay for prisoners has remained low while many of the items you need to buy have increased in cost at the same time as opportunities for paid work in prison, and on temporary release, have decreased: “weekly pay that prisoners receive needs to be reviewed”.

HMPPS responded

We have introduced a new Incentives Policy Framework, which replaces IEP policy and came into effect in January 2020. The new policy focuses on incentivising positive behaviour, including engagement in activities which reduce reoffending, while ensuring that poor behaviour can still be tackled through loss of privileges. This should provide a degree of consistency across prisons, whilst giving governors greater freedom to tailor their Incentives schemes to local needs and challenges, and offer incentives that are genuinely valued by prisoners.

The new policy is based on evidence of what works for behavioural support, positive reinforcement and procedural justice. It provides information on how to protect prisoners with vulnerabilities, including those at risk of self-harm.

What next?

New prisoner forums will be set up to give people the chance to discuss incentives offered, fairness and how the scheme is being operated in your prison.

You said that better use of incentives could be made by:

- Increasing scope for earned privileges;
- Making the IEP scheme fairer, more motivating and less punitive;
- Reviewing and improving prisoners’ work opportunities and pay.

TIME LINE
January 2020

- Director General of Probation agrees action on pre-sentence reports and information for courts after IAP and Magistrates Association report on community sentences with treatment requirements.
- National Audit Office and IAP visit HMP Wormwood Scrubs to follow up Keeping Safe and NAO report on mental health in prisons.
- Prison Governors Association and IAP prepare survey on misuse of prison as place of safety for people in urgent need of health and social care.

February 2020

- Inside Time publishes special report on Keeping Safe outcomes.
- Keeping Safe conference: rallying point for suicide prevention in prisons.
- Prison Radio produces Keeping Safe podcast.

March 2020

- Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody, co-chaired by the Prisons, Public Health and Policing Ministers, consider Keeping Safe special report.
- Royal College of Nursing and IAP report on expert consultation on reducing natural deaths in custody.
- IAP produces revised report on health and wellbeing of people still serving IPP sentences.

Meeting basic needs

“In prison what may seem trivial to others seems very important in a prisoner’s eyes.”

You said

Daily life is severely restricted for many people in custody: *“We only get one shower a week, one phone call a week. One session of exercise a week.”*

Many prisoners suggested ways to improve the mood and morale by: *“More time outside at weekends - what harm is it to open the wing doors into [the] exercise yard during summer so you can walk freely in and out and feel the sun on your face?”* - *“More library. We get 10 mins once a week to find a book.”* - *“A chance to do a course where you work hard to achieve good marks ... and a reward for achieving it”* - *“Perhaps even some stray pets like they have in America for lifer prisoners.”*

You told us that basic needs can be met by:

- Maintaining a decent, safe, clean environment;
- Developing a culture where people can maintain their identity, dignity and hope;
- Ensuring access to sanitation, showers, exercise, fresh air, daylight and nourishing food at sensible times.

HMPPS responded

We have invested an additional £31 million over the last year to improve conditions in some of the prisons with the most pressing issues. We have refurbished nearly 1,000 cells, over 100 shower blocks and 14 food serveries, and carried out essential fire safety work.

We have launched a project to improve cleanliness and decency by producing cleaning schedules and introducing new guidance and training. We are working to improve existing contracts and services.

We have drawn on research by academics to ensure our new prisons are designed to encourage rehabilitation through a more normalised environment, with access to the outdoors, use of colour, light, lower noise levels, signage and an environment that is clean and decent for all who live, work and visit prisons.

What next?

HMPPS has a further £156 million of maintenance funding in 2020-21. This will be targeted at critical infrastructure such as fire systems, boilers and showers, to improve conditions for those living and working in prisons. As well as over 3,500 modern places already being created, up to £2.5 billion will be spent on creating 10,000 additional modern prison places. HMPPS maintains that it will provide better opportunities for rehabilitation and are being built to a specification drawing on what makes environments rehabilitative.



Increasing family contact

“At this prison telephones are in cell and can be used 6.30am - 11pm. So if you’re feeling low you can contact family or friends for help, a chat or to offload. I feel this should be considered for every prison as this will help everyone.”

You said

Contact with families and friends is vital to safeguard lives when people are at their most vulnerable: *“If people are in certain positions where they feel like ending their life and would like to talk to a close friend who’s also in custody then it should be allowed.”*

Family members from Nepacs advised: *“Prompt follow up from phone calls/messages from concerned family and friends. Do not dismiss them as worriers, worse still nuisances. Reduce time it takes to arrange telephone PIN and visits.”*

HMPPS responded

You said that we should roll out in-cell telephones and IT across the estate, hold people as close to home as possible, and set up an emergency contact line for families and friends. Since 2017 we have invested £17 million in installing in-cell telephones in prisons, with the aim that by the spring of this year 50 public-sector prisons will have this technology.

You told us that family contact could be improved by:

- Introducing and rolling out across the prison estate in-cell telephones at reduced cost and access to IT;
- Holding people as close to home as possible;
- Setting up an emergency contact line for families and friends.

We are also reconfiguring the adult male estate with clearer functions for prisons – reception, training and resettlement, so that prisoners have the right conditions to access the necessary services and support at the right time in their sentence for their rehabilitation. We recognise that closeness to home is important for maintaining family ties and we are prioritising closeness to court for men on remand and closeness to home for men serving shorter sentences. Men serving lengthy sentences will spend far longer in resettlement prisons preparing for release closest to home.

What next?

Research by PACT, Prison Reform Trust and Inquest has revealed that the safer custody emergency helpline, although set up in most, is only working well in one in ten prisons. HMPPS is determined to put things right and has stated in response to Inside Time readers: *“We are working to improve how family and friends can make contact in an emergency, by making contact information more readily available, by improving the way that calls are routed and answered, and by ensuring that they are always recorded and followed up by staff. It remains a challenge for us to make sure that we get this right in every case, and we are committed to making further improvements.”*

Improving regimes

“Time behind the door is a joke. It’s basically 22 hours per day. There is no purposeful activity to keep people’s minds active.”

You said

Almost a third of your letters and calls were about when - and for how long - prisoners are allowed out of their cells, and what they can do when they are out. In a phone message you said: *“... people need to have more time out of their cells and less shut downs with short notice.”*

Some prisons organised good inductions: *“And so here I am, at HMP Stafford. In fairness, upon arrival, it was a breath of fresh air. The reception was warm, clean, comfortable and the staff were friendly. I was given a cup of tea by a Listener and he explained the scheme. I then moved to the Induction Wing which was clean, airy and welcoming. The first week was structured and my mood improved significantly.”*

And did badly: *“The first night in [a London prison] is spent on E wing, or the ‘induction wing’ as it is rather optimistically called ... New arrivals are placed in a filthy, cold cell with an in-cell lavatory which is caked in what I can only imagine is something I really do not want to imagine!”*

You said regimes could be improved by:

- Increasing time out of cell;
- Developing a consistent programme of purposeful activity, opportunities for work and ROTL;
- Ensuring proper first night/induction procedures and thorough-going preparation for release.

HMPPS responded

We have published new good practice guidance for prisons on “early days” and how to ensure first night and induction processes are safe and supportive.

Our Education and Employment strategy, published in May 2018, set out our approach to ensuring prisoners develop the skills they need to secure employment on release. We have overhauled the prison education system to improve prisoners’ access to vocational training tailored to local labour market needs and jobs on release. Information about each individual’s education needs and courses now moves round the system preventing re-assessment of prisoners every time someone is transferred.

We made release on temporary license (ROTL) available to more prisoners, earlier in their sentences and for longer periods. The latest published data (April-June 2019) shows that 4,534 prisoners had at least one ROTL during the quarter, a year on year increase of 8%.

We set up the New Futures Network (NFN), the new specialist part of the prison service that brokers partnerships between prisons and employers in England and Wales. NFN helps prisoners find ROTL work placements as well as jobs on release. NFN regional employment brokers are now in place in 17 out of 18 prison groups across England and Wales.

What next?

From your letters to the IAP and reports by HM Inspector of Prisons, it’s clear that many prisons struggle to provide an active day and that many people are locked in their cells for long periods with nothing to do. Following the Harris review, the IAP would like figures on time out of cell published for each prison and prompt efforts to enable prisoners to use, not waste, time in custody.



One death is one too many

“I am really concerned about the rise in the levels of self-harm in recent years and the number of self-inflicted deaths in our prisons, and the Ministry of Justice and Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service are working hard to address this. One death in those circumstances is one too many.” Secretary of State for Justice Robert Buckland MP QC speaking to Inside Time last year.



Places of safety and hope

“Any prisoner taking their own life in custody is a tragedy and I am determined that all our prisons are places of safety and hope. As one prisoner told the Keeping Safe Review, prisons are a punishment, not places to be punished and we will continue to invest in creating environments where prisoners feel supported and are treated with decency and fairness. This entails addressing the rise of drugs and violence and creating a workforce of prison officers who have sufficient capacity and training to support those in crisis. Work is also underway to improve conditions across the prison estate, as well as training and development opportunities for offenders. Through this work, we can create a safe, secure prison system and reduce the number of deaths in custody.” Lucy Frazer QC MP, Minister of State for Prisons and Probation.

Dealing with drugs and violence

“My suggestion is, obviously they need to stop the use of ‘Spice’ in prisons because that’s why a lot of people deteriorate - that happened to me. I am very lucky to be here today. I was actually cut down from hanging but mine was purely down to Spice use.”

You said

Over 20% of your letters and telephones calls to the IAP emphasised the impact drugs can have in prisons. Someone described the prison system as *“in the midst of an epidemic that’s called Spice”*. Another wrote: *“Prison right now is a very dangerous place, it’s unsafe for staff and us inmates and it’s all to do with shortage of staff and the legal high called ‘Spice’ as it’s ruined the prison system.”*

Drugs and debt, leading to threats and violence, leading to self-harm and even death is on everyone’s mind. Inside Time is filled with dire warnings: *“Every day there is at least 3 or 4 Code Blue’s, or a load of lads walking round like zombies”*.

You warned: *“Stop the bullying”*. You want: *“bullying to be taken more seriously to prevent suicides”*. *“More testing for NPS”*. Increase prisoner wages to lessen the chances of prisoners and their families being captured by debts they will struggle to repay. *“I believe there should be an amnesty for all users of Spice along with treatment and counselling...”*

You said that the best ways to deal with violence, drugs and debt is by:

- Tackling/not tolerating bullying and threats;
- Improving testing for NPS and offering an amnesty/treatment;
- Allowing for safe disclosure and increasing support for prisoners who want to serve their sentence responsibly.

HMPPS responded

You said that we needed to tackle bullying, improve testing and treatment for psychoactive substances, and increase support for prisoners who want to serve their sentences responsibly.

We are improving the way that violence is managed in prisons through the Challenge, Support, and Intervention Plan (CSIP), which is aimed at individuals who are violent or whose behaviour suggests that they are likely to be violent towards others during their time in custody. CSIP allows staff to work with individuals to understand what makes them tick and the reasons behind their violent behaviour, so that they can be given the right type of support to achieve their goals in a way that is not harmful to others. Support can range from courses or programmes to some more simple actions that create small steps towards positive change.

In 2019, we published a national Prison Drugs Strategy. It has three objectives - restricting supply, reducing demand and building recovery. The overall aim is to reduce drug misuse in prisons, thereby better protecting staff and prisoners and creating conditions for offenders to get the help they need to turn their lives around. Substantial investment has been made on equipment to screen for drugs. We also circulated guidance and examples of best practice to our staff. We are working on reforms to random drug testing and prevalence testing through changes to legislation.

In 8 prisons we have introduced Incentivised Substance Free Living units, offering compact based drug testing. Early indications are that we are seeing lower levels of violence and self-harm on these units, high numbers of negative results for men and improved relationships between partner agencies and staff - thereby building relationships between all who work on those units.

What next?

HMPPS is looking to create substance free living units in more prisons. The Prisons Minister, Lucy Frazer, has just announced that £28million will now be spent on drug body scanners in 16 prisons.

Achieving justice and fairness

“I have seen so many IPP prisoners harming themselves unreported and taking any drugs just to end the suffering quickly because this is nothing but torture of the highest order...”

You said

Approximately a quarter of your letters and telephone messages focussed on the sentence or status of the respondent. Some described the stress for people maintaining their innocence. Many focussed on the pressure and uncertainty of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences: *“I’ve been in prison now nearly 7 years, it’s my first time in. I got a 3 year IPP in 2010 and from day one suicide is something I’ve considered.”*

Hope is very important: *“we need to see light at the end of the tunnel. We need to feel like we have some power to determine our futures, power to effect some change in our lives that would give us hope that there is a future there for us.”*

HMPPS responded

We continue to review the cases of IPP prisoners who have failed to achieve release or progression to open conditions despite two or more parole reviews. To date, over 1,400 reviews have taken place with 272 IPP prisoners from this group having achieved release, and a further 370 a progressive move to open conditions.

There are now four Progression Regimes providing 385 places in the prison estate, which offer people serving IPP sentences who are struggling to progress to an environment in which they may work to understand and address their risks, with dedicated support from staff.

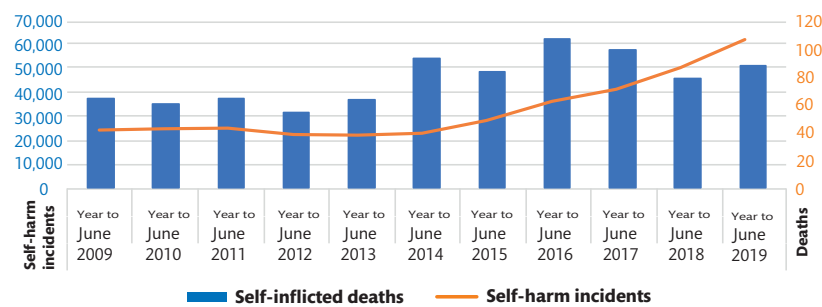
Maintaining innocence is not a barrier to progression. In 2017 we introduced two new accredited programmes, Kaizen and Horizon, that are designed to be compatible with individuals who maintain their innocence of the offence for which they were convicted. Participants are not required to admit to their offence, however they must be willing to identify problems in their lives which they are motivated to work on and change for the better.

What next?

HMPPS is developing accredited offending behaviour programmes which are future focussed and do not require an admission of guilt. For long-term prisoners, HMPPS is introducing the Prison Offender Manager role to be responsible for assessment, coordination and delivery of the sentence plan. Offender managers will have contact with prisoners delivering one-to-one supervision that is structured and based on the latest effective practice techniques to support behavioural change and a reduction of risk of serious harm and reoffending. They will be supported by the Senior Probation Officer in each prison.

HMPPS is developing guidance for families of prisoners serving IPP sentences to increase understanding of the processes around key areas such as parole, release and recall. The guidance will also identify how they can help and support progression of their loved-ones and will be available by Spring 2020.

Self-inflicted deaths and self-harm in prison, year to June 2009 to year to June 2019



Making greater use of peer support

“The inception of the Listeners’ scheme in Swansea prison in 1992 is probably the best thing to have ever happened in prison. I would suggest that thousands of lives have been saved in that time.”

You said

There is a need for: *“Stronger use and presence of Listeners and Peer Mentor roles.”* - *“More volunteer work to keep people occupied and feel they have a purpose to get up each morning.”* - *“I don’t think prisons make enough use of talent in the prison population with regard to peer support.”* And an example of the positive impact peer supporters have at HMP Hull: *“... we also try to promote a community feel within the wing and encourage people to engage in purposeful activities or employment ... building the community spirit (so people look out for each other) and watching for behavioural changes or proactively visiting prisoners to just see how they are from time to time.”*

You proposed making greater use of peer support by:

- Building up and supporting Samaritan Listeners;
- Making volunteering and taking personal responsibility a central part of the regime in partnership with voluntary organisations;
- Increasing support for transgenre prisoners and other vulnerable groups.

HMPPS responded

We remain very proud of the work that we do in partnership with Samaritans through the Listener scheme. Twenty-eight years after the first scheme was established in HMP Swansea, there were 114 Listener schemes operating in prisons in England and Wales during 2018-19. Over 1,400 trained Listeners provided over 30,000 hours of emotional support in nearly 50,000 contacts with their fellow prisoners. Nearly 800 Samaritans volunteers are involved in supporting the scheme, and they facilitated over 3,000 support meetings with Listeners during the year.

These numbers are available for the first time this year, because we have worked with Samaritans to improve information available about the operation of the schemes so that prisons can work with Samaritans volunteers to make sure that Listeners get the support they need to do this vital work. We have also worked with Samaritans to improve the application process for Listeners, to make sure that it is fair and transparent and to maximise opportunities for prisoners to volunteer.

What next?

Internet access to Samaritans is being piloted at HMP Wayland. Supported by HMPPS, the Samaritans have developed training for Listeners in supporting people affected by a suicide. Even if you don’t have a peer support role, you can look out for and support other prisoners. A small act of kindness can transform lives.

Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody / write to us at ‘FREEPOST IAP’ Mark envelope ‘confidential access’. www.iapondeathsincustody.org Inside Time, Botley Mills, Botley, Southampton, Hampshire SO30 2GB. Telephone: 01489 795945 www.insidetime.org

Call Samaritans on **0845 450 7797**
FREE from a prison phone
 This is the number to dial from a landing or in-cell phone.

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