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**Family Liaison Following a Death in Custody**

1 April 2022

**Returning to face-to-face visits**We have reviewed how we break the news of a prisoner’s death in custody to their bereaved families in line with the Government’s messaging on learning to live the virus and in consultation with Trade Unions.

From now on the news of a death of a prisoner should be given to a prisoner’s next of kin (NOK) by a trained Family Liaison officer (FLO), wherever possible, and in person, in line with the national policy set out in chapter 13 of PSI 64/2011, and no longer routinely by telephone.

**Next of Kin records**

It is important that we can contact a prisoner’s NOK (if we have prisoner consent) if their loved ones become unwell. All prisons should ensure as far as possible that their NOK contact details are up to date.

**FLO training**

FLO training can be booked via contacting Training Services: [training-services-delegate-management@gov.sscl.com](mailto:training-services-delegate-management@gov.sscl.com). If prisons have any difficulties in booking a FLO course, they can notify their Group Safety Team who will be able to raise this with the National Safety Team.

**Staff support**

Any member of staff who is being asked to contact families after a death must be fully supported. ‘Offloading’ should be the expected norm, and staff should be encouraged to talk.

Managers should remind staff of how they can access individual support (including from the Care Team, TRIM practitioners, Chaplaincy, and the Safety team). Staff can self-refer to face-to-face or telephone counselling via PAM Assist our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), they can also seek support from their GP.

In addition to each member of staff being able to identify a source of support with which they feel comfortable, senior staff must take responsibility for ensuring the following occurs:

* Allowing sufficient time for pre-briefing and preparation prior to visiting the NOK.
* Ensuring staff are debriefed following any contact with the NOK and providing them with the opportunity to offload.
* Ensuring that the workload is spread evenly, and the same person is not called upon repeatedly to act as a FLO.
* Allowing staff sufficient time and space after they have broken the news of a death, to reflect and update their records.
* Considering how contact with the family will be maintained, who will be responsible, and what that follow up needs to consist of

We will be sharing revised FLO support and guidance documentation shortly. The guidance will provide staff and managers with information, although they do not replace the formal training course, and staff will need to attend FLO training.

**Health and Safety**

The safety of our staff is always of utmost importance. Therefore, when arranging to visit the home of a prisoner’s next of kin to break the news of a death in custody, staff should follow COVID safe working protocols. COVID is still a risk, and we must continue to do what we can help to protect staff and others by limiting the spread of the virus. Wearing a face covering indoors and in enclosed spaces can help.

**Funeral attendance**

Staff attendance at a prisoner’s funeral remains subject to a local risk assessment by the Governor/Director. Prisons can continue to use technology to enable the viewing of funeral ceremonies, if possible and appropriate, together with supportive measures from chaplaincy and other colleagues. The availability of technology should not encourage refusal of attendance in the first place but may be used where physical visit is not supported. More information about funeral attendance can be found here [Latest updates – Prisons Exceptional Regime & Service Delivery (hmppsintranet.org.uk)](https://pogp.hmppsintranet.org.uk/latest-updates/)

**HMPPS National Safety Team**

**April 2022**