



# Ministry of JUSTICE

National Offender  
Management Service

## **WHO NEEDS TO SEE THIS BULLETIN?**

Please ensure this is circulated to **ALL STAFF** who have contact with prisoners

Please **print out copies** of this bulletin and distribute around your establishment.  
You may also wish to distribute to Managers at your establishment's morning meeting.

## ***Safer Custody Quick-time Learning Bulletin***

This 'quick time' learning bulletin is part of a series of new publications from NOMS Safer Custody and Offender Policy Group. The aim of the bulletin is to highlight key learning points which may be useful to all establishments in helping them to identify potential safer custody risks and take remedial action where it is needed.

### **ISSUE: THE NEED FOR EXTRA VIGILANCE FOR PRISONERS FACING TRIAL FOR SPECIFIC OFFENCES OR THOSE WHICH HAVE ATTRACTED PUBLIC INTEREST**

A recent apparently self inflicted death has highlighted the risk of self harm and suicide associated with trials that are likely to expose the prisoner to particularly intense emotional pressure. Circumstances likely to increase risk include the following:

- A **murder, serious violent or sexual offence** where the victim is a family member (particularly the prisoner's **child or partner**)
- A trial that will attract a **high level of public interest** where there is likely to be **public shame** on the prisoner **prior, during or immediately following** the trial
- **Publicity about the offence** such as local or national **press attention** or coverage on **Crimewatch**
- **Abuse from other prisoners** in relation to the above offences
- The **breakdown of other family relationships** in relation to the above offences

### **! Learning point**

What processes do you have in place to identify and support prisoners who are on, or have previously been on, an ACCT and have a key event such as a trial or anniversary approaching? Do you arrange case reviews or post-closure reviews with these events in mind?

### **! Learning point**

Do you have good systems in place to accurately record and share information about prisoners who may be vulnerable to self harm or suicide, particularly in relation to the nature of their offence and an upcoming trial?

### **! Learning point**

Section 4.1 of PSO 2700 'Suicide Prevention & Self Harm Management', provides the following advice on prisoners charged with violent offences against a family member and/ or homicide (*mandatory actions are in italics*):

- 4.1.1 Prisoners charged with homicide are a particularly high-risk group, and within this prisoners charged with homicide against a partner or family member are at an exceptionally high risk of suicide. *Reception/first night staff must be made aware of the suicide and self-harm risks associated with prisoners who are charged with offences related to violence against a family member and/or homicide.....*Care of such prisoners will require close monitoring of trigger points, for example during any trial or around key anniversaries. HMCIP has also emphasised the need to give consideration to potential differences in level of risk-to-self between men and women where charges relate to homicide of a violent partner.
- 4.1.2 *Establishments must make provision for additional risk assessments and care to keep safe prisoners who have been charged with domestic violence and/or domestic murder/murder of a family member. Such provision must include ensuring a record is maintained to show what action has been undertaken.*

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The purpose of this learning bulletin is to prevent a recurrence of such events. Are any of these issues relevant to where you work? What action may be needed to improve how you deliver safer custody to prisoners in your establishment?

A detailed article on the risks associated with specific offences will be published in Safer Custody News over the coming months. If you have identified learning points which may assist other establishments in delivering safer custody please contact us at [scoplearning@noms.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:scoplearning@noms.gsi.gov.uk). Any resulting learning bulletins will be anonymous.