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**BETTER INFORMATION-SHARING ON VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION
NEEDED TO HELP PREVENT PRISON SUICIDES, SAYS OMBUDSMAN**

Prison staff need to record and share more information about violence and intimidation to improve prisoner safety, said Nigel Newcomen, the new Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, publishing a report into the impact of intimidation, violence and bullying on those who take their own lives in prison.

The report, *Learning from PPO Investigations: Violence reduction, bullying and safety*, has been produced as a result of the finding that 20 per cent of the PPO's investigations into self-inflicted deaths in custody found evidence that the deceased was subject to bullying or intimidation by other prisoners in the three months prior to their death. This does not necessarily mean that these prisoners took their lives solely because they were concerned for their safety. The vulnerabilities that may make a prisoner susceptible to harm by others are often similar to those that make them vulnerable to harming themselves.

This report looks at 42 investigations into self-inflicted deaths, and finds that staff responses to allegations of bullying, assaults and other related incidents could have been better in 17 cases.

The report found that:

- in some cases, more reliable and thorough recording of information might have enabled a clearer picture to emerge of the risks an individual faced; and

- in other cases, although information was recorded, it was not shared with those who could have usefully contributed to identifying and alleviating the problems.

The report also calls for an improved understanding of violence reduction and how to improve feelings of safety in prisons and reiterates the importance of protecting prisoners at specific risk of victimisation.

Nigel Newcomen said:

“The need for better sharing of information is a recurring theme in our investigations into deaths in custody. In particular, some self-inflicted deaths might have been avoided if there had been improved recording and sharing of information relating to violence, intimidation and bullying. We come across many examples where seemingly small pieces of information were known about a prisoner, but a lack of awareness of the relevance of this information meant that staff did not appreciate the important role that sharing it could play in improving a prisoner’s safety.”

- ENDS -

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. **The report:** A digital copy of the report can be found on our website. Visit www.ppo.gov.uk.
2. **Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO):** The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) independently investigates deaths that occur in prison, immigration detention or amongst the residents of probation approved premises. He also adjudicates on complaints by detainees and probationers. Nigel Newcomen CBE was appointed PPO in September 2011 after 8 years as Deputy Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales.
3. **Investigation reports:** The PPO’s investigation reports are issued to the bereaved families, to HM Coroners, to the services in remit, and to the relevant Primary Care Trust. Anonymised versions of the reports are put on the PPO website after the inquest. This report is based on analysis of 206 investigation reports into self-inflicted deaths in prison custody between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2009.
4. **Contact us:** Please contact Jane Parsons, PPO Press Office, on 0207 035 2123 or 07880 787452 from 0915 to 1415 Monday to Friday if you would like more information

or to request an interview with Nigel Newcomen. Email mail@ppo.gsi.gov.uk for further information and hard copies of the report. Alternatively please send requests or feedback to Prisons and Probation Ombudsman's Office, Ashley House, 2 Monck Street, London, SW1P 2BQ.