

Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody

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The Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Cabinet Office

Dear Kit,

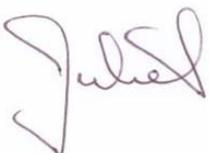
I understand that you are leading the government's response to the extreme heat warning issued by the Met Office. Can I ask you to draw on your considerable experience as former chair of the Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody to ensure that active steps are taken to protect the lives of people detained by the state.

As you know, custodial settings are often poorly ventilated environments with strictly limited access to fresh air. The prison service in particular is struggling with dangerously low staffing levels at the same time as coping with new Covid outbreaks in over a third of prisons in England and Wales. Independent monitors reported recently that HMP Lewes was unable consistently to offer as little as 30 minutes each day in the air. An IAPDC visit to Manston immigration assessment centre revealed that, even in May this year, air conditioning was not fully effective in large tented facilities. As former policing minister you will know that, apart from some of those that are newly built, most police custody suites are poorly designed for extreme weather conditions, as are court holding cells. Limits will need to be placed on time spent in criminal justice escort vehicles. Hydration is essential.

It is vital to ensure that there are enough custody officers and health colleagues with the capacity to identify and respond to deteriorating physical and mental health conditions within the population for whom they are responsible.

We ask you, Cabinet colleagues and your officials to ensure that all custodial services have the support and resources necessary to meet the additional challenge of extreme and, in some cases, life-threatening heat.

As ever,



Juliet Lyon CBE, Chair of the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody