



Ministry of  
**JUSTICE**



*Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody*

*Chair: Lord Toby Harris  
Secretary: Laura McCaughan*

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**To All Family Members who attended the IAP Listening Day – September 2011**

I am writing on behalf of the Independent Advisory Panel to let you know what action we are taking as a result of the listening day you attended in September last year.

I presented the report of the day and a summary paper of the Panel's view to the Ministerial Board on Deaths in Custody on 7 February. The Board was chaired by Paul Burstow, Minister of State for Care Services, and there was a great deal of interest amongst Board members in the problems we highlighted.

The Panel recommended to the Board that:

- Trusts with responsibility for detained patients should have procedures in place for ensuring good quality family liaison with bereaved families. Families should be signposted to independent sources of legal advice, help and bereavement support.
- Policies on investigation should be explained to families and Trusts should ensure they are offered an opportunity to be involved, receive ongoing information and have sight of reports.
- Trusts should keep families informed of actions taken to learn from their relative's death including changes to policies and procedures as a result of the death, investigation or inquest.

The Minister recognised the importance of positive engagement with families by health providers, especially when things go wrong. He agreed that Department of Health would follow up our recommendations, initially by including these insights in the National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

The Panel will meet Department of Health officials to work out the specific steps that can be taken to implement our recommendations.

We will also be working with the custodial sectors and investigatory bodies to develop and implement common principles on the delivery of high quality family liaison for those whose relatives die in custody.

I greatly appreciate your contribution to this important area of the Panel's work. We would not be able to take forward recommendations for improvement without your thoughtful insights.

The Panel's paper and INQUEST's report of the day will be published on our website shortly.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toby Harris". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. There is a small dot above the 'i' in "Harris" and a flourish under the 'y' in "Toby".

Lord Toby Harris