

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice (Crispin Blunt):

The creation of the Ministerial Council on Deaths in Custody was announced in 2008 and it has been in operation since March 2009. Its creation was in response to an independent review of previous structures – the Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody and the Ministerial Roundtable on Suicide. Significant reforms were made to these structures and the Council has been working effectively for three years. I am pleased to announce that, following an evaluation of the effectiveness of the arrangements, the Council will be funded to continue for a further three year term. Lord Harris of Haringey has been reappointed as Chair of the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody.

The Council comprises three tiers, the first of which is a Ministerial Board, chaired jointly by the Ministry of Justice and ministerial colleagues from the Department of Health and Home Office. The Board brings together senior leaders across the custodial sectors as well as regulatory and Third Sector stakeholders to take forward an agenda aimed at making custodial settings safer and contributing to a reduction in deaths.

The second tier is the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody. This is an advisory non-departmental public body. It is chaired by Lord Harris of Haringey and consists of six independent expert Panel members. The Panel is the principal source of advice to Ministers and the Board on measures to reduce deaths in custody.

The third tier is a broad based stakeholder and practitioner group. There are over 100 members of this group, representing the interests of families, Third Sector organisations, practitioners from all sectors and the inspectorate and investigatory bodies.