

## Out of Committee Paper 82 – Annex A

*Probably the main thing to add is what I planned to say to the Ministerial Board about prison suicide. I know your interest is young people but my points about safety in prisons overall apply equally to this age group.*

*The number of self-inflicted deaths in prison in England & Wales in 2014 rose to 84, having been 75 in 2013 & 61 in 2012, following a period of comparatively low figures from 2008-12. The rate of suicide (i.e. taking into account prisoner numbers) followed the same pattern, rising from 70 to 100 deaths per 100,000 prisoners in the two years to 2014, a rise of 43%.*

*One question is whether this rise may be explained by rates outside prison. This is made slightly more difficult by the fact that we don't have general population rates for 2014, so we have to compare with rates for 2011-13, the most recent available years. Essentially, there is nothing like a 43% rise in suicide rates outside prison over such a short period. The male suicide rate rose by 8% over 2011-13; even the highest rise in any specific male age group, i.e. a 30% rise in 55-59 year olds, is well below the prison rise.*

*The rise in the general population rate has happened over a longer period, starting in 2008, i.e. the first year of the recession, but even if you take the whole 6 year period from 2007-13, the rise in male suicides is 17%, again well below the prison rise.*

*We have to be cautious in drawing conclusions about prison suicide numbers over a short period but on the best available comparisons, the rise in prison suicide cannot be explained by the pattern or magnitude of the rise in suicide outside prison.*

*We therefore have to examine prison-specific factors such as changes in the prison population (e.g. more vulnerable or high risk people) or in how prisons are run, and the most obvious change is in prison staffing which NOMS have reported to have fallen by 29% since 2010. It is not clear what analysis MoJ/NOMS have done to examine this possible causal factor, leading to public statements that there is no "direct link" - it is not an easy thing to study. More likely, anything they have done has been inconclusive and would not justify this public reassurance. Having said that, the possible link between staffing and suicide may not be simple - it could reflect less vigilance, reduced privileges, less time to get to know prisoners, or more time in cells. This is what needs to be studied, looking for evidence of safer as well as less safe risk management.*