

NIPS Director General responds to report on death of inmate Samuel Carson

The Prison Service Director General Sue McAllister has said that more needs to be done to tackle bullying in prisons.

She was responding to the publication of the Prisoner Ombudsman's Report into the death of Samuel Carson (19), who died by suicide at Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre on 4 May 2011.

The Director General said: "This was a tragic death and my thoughts today are with Samuel's family. It is quite clear from the Ombudsman's Report that Samuel was subjected to both physical and verbal abuse from other prisoners while he was at Hydebank Wood and the report does, in parts, make difficult reading.

"I am under no illusions that bullying can happen in prisons', with those convicted of or charged with particular offences particularly vulnerable. We do however have a duty of care to those who are sent to prison by the courts and we must do all that we can to protect them as far as possible through exercising the highest professional standards. It is clear from the report that there were deficiencies in the levels of protection offered to Samuel."

The Ombudsman raises 28 issues of concern, 20 of which relate directly to the Prison Service and eight of which fall under the responsibility of the South Eastern Trust (SET). The concerns relating to the Prison Service's management of Samuel primarily relate to failings in dealing with allegations of bullying, inadequate procedures to monitor, inform and communicate issues around bullying, the attitude of some staff who appeared to resign themselves to believing that bullying of particular prisoners was 'inevitable' and inadequate levels of record keeping in the Security Department at Hydebank Wood.

In addressing these points the Director General said: "The Prison Service is committed to providing safe, secure and decent custody for all prisoners and it is clear in this case that our procedures were not always good enough. New protocols in relation to the recording of information and the keeping of contact logs have been introduced to the Security Department at the YOC and staff have been reminded that all accusations of bullying must be fully investigated.

"In addition I have commissioned a corporate audit of security management processes across all establishments to ensure that there is a consistency of approach throughout the Service when handling issues of sensitivity."
offered to Samuel."