



HM Prison &
Probation Service

**Assessment, Care in
Custody and Teamwork**

ACCT

Supporting someone
who might harm
themselves



SAFETY TOOLKIT

April 2021

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Why am I receiving this booklet?

You might be reading this booklet for a number of reasons:

- 1) Someone you know in prison is having a difficult time and might be at risk of hurting themselves
- 2) You might have been asked to get involved in planning the best support for your loved one in prison
- 3) You want to know more about how prisons support people who are having a difficult time and might be at risk of hurting themselves.

This booklet will explain what ACCT is, and how you can get involved.

What is ACCT

Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork – or ACCT – is how we plan support for someone in prison who is at risk of self-harm or suicide.

Its primary purpose is to keep your loved one safe. A dedicated Case Co-ordinator will bring together staff from across many different departments to create a plan of actions to achieve this.

Plans are tailored to the people being supported and their needs, and your loved one will be involved throughout in making decisions about the best support for them.

How might I be involved?

As a family member, friend, loved one, or other source of support, you can help us support someone who is at risk. For example, you might be in a better position to know if their condition is improving or worsening. You might also know what has helped if they have struggled with self-harm or suicidal thoughts in the past.

If the person involved has agreed, staff may contact you to be involved in the ACCT process. Either you or your loved one can decide to withdraw this consent at any time, and stop being involved.

You might speak to a staff member over the phone or be invited to come to the prison. In some cases, you might be invited to a Case Review. This is when lots of different staff involved in your loved one's care come together, and discuss with your loved one:

- How they are feeling
- How well the support they are being given is working • What more could be done to help.

What will happen then?

Staff from across the prison will create or update a Care Plan. This will include all the things that can be done to support the person that you know so that the risk of their harming themselves is reduced.

The Care Plan will include a detailed plan of actions. This could include:

- methods of distraction or improvement of wellbeing (such as time in the gym)
- referral for specific support (such as substance misuse services)
- support with relationships (for example, through family services)
- help with wellbeing related issues (such as eye masks to help sleep)
- referral to supportive networks (such as peer support or Samaritans)
- any other action that could support that individual.

This will usually be supported by regular observations during the day and night to check that your loved one is physically safe, and regular conversations with staff during the day to see how they are coping. You may have heard of 'constant supervision', which is a level of support put in place when staff think someone might be at particularly high risk of harming themselves. This is where a member of staff will be with the person at all times, providing support through conversation and distraction, and making sure they are physically safe. This is usually a temporary measure put in place to keep someone safe, and few people being supported by ACCT will have constant supervision.

You might be able to help with creating the best Care Plan for your loved one. You might know more about what triggers their distress, any specific needs they have or what best supports them. This will help staff provide the right activities, make the right changes and get the right level of support in place.

ACCT will be used to support someone until the risk of harming themselves has reduced. When a person's ACCT is closed, staff will continue to provide extra support for a short time called 'post-closure' period. During this time, staff will be checking that they are coping well and are not starting to struggle again. The person's Case Co-ordinator will speak to them before post-closure has ended to check that the ACCT can be closed completely. Other support will continue to be available to the person after the ACCT is closed, including one to one sessions with their keyworker. You may be able to help during this period, by staying in as regular contact with the person as possible, and making staff aware of how you feel they are doing, along with any causes for concern.

If your loved one is being supported by an ACCT and is released from custody, Released on Temporary Licence (ROTL), or transferred, staff will help them prepare by making them aware of support available, and will share information with any receiving support services or establishments about their risk. Staff will only share information that is appropriate and relevant to the risk, and keeping the person safe from harm.

I have a concern about someone in prison

If you are worried that the person you know in prison – or someone else in the prison – is at risk in any way, please call the Safer Custody Hotline for the prison. You will find details on the prison website.

If you are concerned that there is an immediate threat to their life, please call the prison switchboard and ask to speak to the Duty Governor or Orderly Officer.

You may also wish to contact the Prisoners Families Helpline for any other worries or concerns, on 0808 808 2003 (between 9am and 8pm).