

'Poisoning outbreak' at HMP Lewes chapel service causes ten inmates to fall ill

[Police are investigating a poisoning outbreak](#) at a prison after 10 inmates fell ill after returning from an Easter service at the jail's chapel.

Ambulance, police and fire service teams attended the scene at HMP Lewes, near Brighton, after receiving reports of prisoners falling ill.

Unconfirmed reports from prison sources suggested the prisoners got sick after attending the religious event where food was served at the end. *It was a Maundy Thursday service; I attended one this morning but didn't get a buffet afterwards, or poisoned.*

The men taken ill are being treated in a decontamination facility nearby. Sources said none of the prisoners were believed to be in a serious condition. *Earlier two were said to be 'fighting for their lives' but this was never confirmed and I'm glad to hear it isn't the case.*

Inmates and staff at HMP Lewes are believed to have fallen ill after eating a curry, it has been reported.

The victims are said to have eaten the food after a Maundy service and became ill in a very short space of time, a source told the BBC.

They began vomiting and slurring their words and were giddy and in distress, according to the broadcaster.

The Ministry of Justice has confirmed that three prisoners and three civilian staff have been taken to hospital after the medical incident at HMP Lewes this afternoon. The three

civilians who are in hospital are believed to be chaplaincy staff .. . there is no evidence suggesting drugs were involved.

A source at HMP Lewes said: "They all got sick after going to a religious event at a chapel service with food at the end of it. It's either a case of food poisoning or spiking, but it's happened far too quickly for it just to be food poisoning. It sounds like food prepared in the kitchen has been spiked." *Later reports are saying 'food poisoning' but it does sound a bit too quick. The authorities took it seriously enough to send an "incident support unit CBRN" van, which stands for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear, belonging to South East Coast Ambulance Service. Gloomy as I am I don't think polonium was likely.*

I can't find what the chapel is like these days but when the chapel was newly opened in [2008 the Mail](#) reported thus:- A prison's new chapel will not contain a crucifix to avoid offending Muslim inmates, it emerged today.

Bosses at HMP Lewes have been told the traditional Christian symbol, featuring Jesus nailed to a cross, must not be used in the Grade-II listed Victorian jail's 'multi-faith space'. The room – part of a £1million new block – has been split in two, with one half featuring heated foot baths so Muslim worshippers can wash their feet before prayer.

But the other side, dedicated to Christian prayer, contains just a simple wooden cross and portable altar – both of which can be removed if necessary. According the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB), the traditional Christian crucifix was erased from the chapel's blueprints after discussion with a Muslim imam.

In the last 15 years things in the multi-faith chaplaincy may well have improved, of course.