

# Evidence Bites: Ligature points in hospital

An evidence summary inspired by safety discussions held at the WUTH Safety Summit

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## What is a ligature point?

A ligature point anything that could be used to attach a cord, rope or other material for the purpose of strangulation.

## Ligature risk in an acute setting

Much of the literature around ligature risk is from a mental health setting; however there may be some learning that can be applied to an acute hospital setting.

A national clinical survey of suicide cases published in 2012 describes the ligature points and ligatures used in inpatient suicides and identifies trends over time. The most common ligature points and ligatures were doors, hooks/handles, windows, and belts or sheets/towels, respectively<sup>1</sup>.

## Regulations for management of ligature risk

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) produce a guide for their inspection team that sets out how they should gather evidence and report their findings, as well as giving information about regulations. The CQC guide on Ligature Points states that “there are no specific requirements over the management of ligature risks in hospital facilities outside of the mental health sector, although services that may deal with mentally disordered patients (such as A&E departments) should be aware of the risks and have management plans to meet them.”<sup>2</sup>

The National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) produces guidance on preventing suicide for mental health services; however, there may be some points that could be helpful for an acute setting.<sup>3</sup>

Policies from other NHS Trusts (primarily mental health trusts) are available; please contact the Library & Knowledge Service who can provide examples of these.

## Further reading

1. [Hunt, I.M. et al. \(2012\) Ligature points and ligature types used by psychiatric inpatients who die by hanging: A national study. The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention; 2012; vol. 33 \(no. 2\); p. 87-94. \[OpenAthens login required\]](#)
2. [CQC \(2015\). Ligature points: Brief guide for inspection teams.](#)
3. [NPSA \(2009\). Preventing suicide: a toolkit for mental health services.](#)

For more details or to request an electronic copy of the below, or if you'd like an Evidence Bite on another topic, please contact the Library & Knowledge Service at [wuth.lks@nhs.net](mailto:wuth.lks@nhs.net) or ext. 8610.