

## **OPERATION DEERNESS SPECIAL INVESTIGATION INTO ABUSE AT MEDOMSLEY DETENTION CENTRE BEGINS**

28 February 2024 – Operation Deerness, the special investigation into the abuse that took place at Medomsley Detention Centre (MDC) has begun.

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman announced in October 2023 that they were commissioned by the Secretary of State for Justice to carry out an independent investigation into the abuse that took place between 1961 and 1987.

Medomsley Detention Centre was a facility that held boys and young men aged 17 – 21, some of whom have since reported being subjected to abuse while detained at the centre.

Ombudsman Adrian Usher said: “We will endeavour to understand how this large-scale abuse was able to take place”.

Senior Investigator Richard Tucker, who was hired to lead Operation Deerness said: “I have started to build my team and we are now looking to start working with more people that have been affected by and have knowledge of the abuse that took place.

We are looking for the truth and it is our goal to fully understand what took place. My plea is for more people to come forward and share their experiences with us.

We will not be reinvestigating the facts of the abuse, nor the individual incidents, but we want to give everyone the opportunity to speak to us, if they wish to, so we can give them the chance to be heard.”

Richard shares his plea via a YouTube video and an open letter which explains that people should contact [ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk) if they wish to share their story.

“Those that contact us should have the upmost confidence that we will create a safe space for them and offer the support that they need. I am saddened by the experiences of those who have approached us so far and it is my duty to find the truth.

We respect that not everyone will want to speak to us, however we are keen to have any level of engagement with those who want to be involved so we can gain a full understanding of what went on.”

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman carries out independent investigations into complaints from those in custody and they also investigate deaths in custody. In this special investigation, which is outside of their usual remit, they will independently look into what the authorities<sup>1</sup> knew about the abuse that took place, whether there were opportunities for the authorities to have taken action or intervened at that time, and consider what actions, if any, were taken by the authorities in such instances.

If you wish to share your story, please contact: [ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk) or call/text 07511 165 266.

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### **Notes to editors:**

1. Adrian Usher was appointed as Prisons and Probation Ombudsman in April 2023.
2. The PPO is appointed by and reports directly to the Secretary of State for Justice. The Ombudsman’s office is wholly independent of the services in remit, which include those

provided by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), Prisoner Escort and Custody Service, the Home Office (Immigration Enforcement), the Youth Custody Service, and those local authorities with secure children's homes. It is also operationally independent of, but sponsored by, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

3. The roles and responsibilities of the PPO are set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the latest version of which can be found at <https://www.ppo.gov.uk/about/vision-and-values/terms-of-reference/>

4. The PPO has three main investigative duties:

- complaints made by prisoners, young people in detention, offenders under probation supervision and individuals detained under immigration powers (detained individuals)
- deaths of prisoners, young people in detention, approved premises' residents and detained individuals due to any cause
- deaths of recently released prisoners that occur within 14 days of release from prison (except homicide)

5. To view the Terms of Reference for this special investigation, visit our website.

6. Operation Deerness is the name given for this investigation.

7. For media queries relating to this special investigation, please contact [ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk)