



## **Medomsley Detention Centre abuse investigation launches new appeal for information from ex-staff.**

**15 August 2024** – The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman has announced today that their investigation into the abuse at Medomsley Detention Centre has reached the next phase as they appeal for ex-staff to come forward.

The PPO was commissioned by the previous government in October 2023 to carry out a special investigation into the abuse that occurred at Medomsley Detention Centre between 1961 and 1987.

Following their official press launch in February 2024, the PPO have been contacted by 60 individuals, including victims and their family members, as well as some survivors who have not previously come forward in other police investigations into Medomsley.

They are now launching a new appeal for information from staff or anyone that volunteered at Medomsley to gather an informed picture of how the centre functioned from an operational perspective.

Ombudsman Adrian Usher said, “Information from any type of employee at Medomsley is vital to gain an accurate picture of how the detention centre operated.”

“Whether you were a cleaner, teacher, probation officer, prison officer or a typist - we want and need to hear from you.”

It is understood that some staff were new to the prison service and for many, it was their first role after completing their initial training.

“We know that for some who have already undergone involvement in previous investigations, it may be difficult to revisit some of these issues. I want to reassure you that all information shared will be treated sensitively and staff can remain anonymous if they choose to. This is not a criminal investigation, but we do require your input to draw together accurate conclusions.”

In announcing this next phase, the PPO also shared new information on their progress so far. To date they have reviewed over 2500 documents in relation to Medomsley which has enabled them to identify key authorities and organisations who were involved or hold information about Medomsley over the relevant period.

Their Call for Evidence announced on 15 July formally requested specific organisations and authorities to share information they hold, and to date, 32 authorities and organisations have engaged. The list ranges from healthcare to local government, charities, and religious organisations, ensuring that all parties involved have contributed to the investigation as required.

“Since launching this investigation, my team has made tremendous advances in unearthing new information as well as reviewing thousands of pieces of information that was already held”, said Adrian.

The investigative office also state they have carried out around 40 interviews to date, including people affected by the abuse as well as former members of staff.

“I do understand that being interviewed must have been extremely difficult for all witnesses. I commend those who have spoken about working at Medomsley and have generously given us their time during these important interviews. We appreciate the trust you have instilled in us.”

The PPO values the participation of these key witnesses, without whom it would not be possible to build an accurate picture of how Medomsley Detention Centre operated.

**-ENDS-**

**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://ppo.gov.uk/corporate\\_document/terms-of-reference/](https://ppo.gov.uk/corporate_document/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:  
<https://ppo.gov.uk/document/terms-of-reference-medomsley-special-investigation/>
6. Operation Deerness is the name given for this investigation. The PPO are investigating what the authorities knew about the abuse, whether there were opportunities for them to have taken action and intervened, as well as what they did (if anything) at the time to stop such instances from occurring.
7. For media queries relating to this special investigation, please contact [ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk)