

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Jack Edwards, a resident at Trent House Approved Premises, on 8 December 2023

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

OUR VISION

To deliver high quality and timely independent investigations and work closely with partners to achieve tangible benefits for the safety and confidence of those in custody and under community supervision.

WHAT WE DO



WHAT WE VALUE



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The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman aims to make a significant contribution to safer, fairer custody and community supervision. One of the most important ways in which we work towards that aim is by carrying out independent investigations into deaths, due to any cause, of prisoners, young people in detention, residents of approved premises and detainees in immigration centres.

If my office is to best assist His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in ensuring the standard of care received by those within service remit is appropriate, our recommendations should be focused, evidenced and viable. This is especially the case if there is evidence of systemic failure.

Mr Jack Edwards, a resident of Trent House Approved Premises, died from a head injury on 8 December 2023, after he was assaulted in the community three days earlier. He was 24 years old. I offer my condolences to his family and friends.

On the day of his release, after he met his community offender manager and booked into Trent House, Mr Edwards went into Nottingham where he was assaulted and received a significant head injury. Mr Edwards had previously raised concerns with his community offender manager that he had links to gangs in Nottingham. The police found no evidence that Mr Edwards' death was gang related, and it appears to have been the result of a random altercation.

This version of my report, published on my website, has been amended to remove the names of staff and residents involved in my investigation.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

July 2024

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Summary

Events

1. On 6 September 2023, Mr Jack Edwards was sentenced to 26 weeks in prison for possession of a bladed article and sent to HMP Nottingham. His community offender manager noted that Mr Edwards had links to gangs in Nottingham.
2. On 29 September, Mr Edwards' community offender manager completed a referral for him to live in an approved premises (AP) on his release.
3. On 2 October, Mr Edwards was transferred to HMP Ranby.
4. On 3 November, Mr Edwards was accepted for Trent House AP, in Nottingham. Mr Edwards told his community offender manager that he was at risk in Nottingham because of his links to gangs. His community offender manager sent a list of the names and gangs which Mr Edwards said he was at risk from to the Nottinghamshire Police Organised Crime Team. An intelligence analyst checked their databases and found no intelligence to suggest that Mr Edwards was at risk in Nottingham.
5. On 5 December, Mr Edwards was released on licence. His licence conditions required him to report at 2.00pm, to his community offender manager at the Mansfield Probation Office. When he went to this appointment, Mr Edwards was under the influence of alcohol but was noted to be coherent enough to go through the induction paperwork.
6. At about 5.00pm, Mr Edwards arrived at Trent House. A residential support worker noted that Mr Edwards was under the influence of cannabis and alcohol. She contacted his community offender manager and agreed that Mr Edwards would receive a warning for being under the influence. After his induction, Mr Edwards left the AP.
7. That evening, Mr Edwards had an altercation with some youths in a park and sustained a head injury. Nottinghamshire Police found that the altercation was not gang related. There is no indication that Mr Edwards previously knew any of the group with whom he had the altercation.
8. On 8 December, Mr Edwards died in hospital. Two teenagers were subsequently convicted of Mr Edwards' murder.

Findings

9. Probation staff considered Mr Edwards' fears that he would be a victim of violence in Nottingham when determining whether to allocate him a place at Trent House. The assault that led to his death was seemingly random and there is no evidence that it was linked to gang activity.

The Investigation Process

10. HMPPS notified us of Mr Edwards' death on 11 December 2023.
11. The investigator issued notices to staff and prisoners at Trent House Approved Premises informing them of the investigation and asking anyone with relevant information to contact him. No one responded.
12. The investigator obtained copies of relevant extracts from Mr Edwards' prison and probation records.
13. The investigator interviewed four members of staff at Trent House AP on 1 and 2 February 2024 and a probation officer at the Mansfield Probation Office on 2 February.
14. We informed HM Coroner for Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire of the investigation. We have sent the Coroner a copy of this report.
15. The Ombudsman's office contacted Mr Edward's mother to explain the investigation and to ask if she had any matters she wanted us to consider. She did not respond.
16. We shared the initial report with HM Prison and Probation Service. They did not identify any factual inaccuracies in the PPO report.

Background Information

Trent House Approved Premises

17. Approved premises (formerly known as probation and bail hostels) mostly accommodate offenders released from prison on licence and those directed there by the courts as a condition of bail. Their purpose is to provide a supportive and structured environment. Residents are responsible for their own healthcare and are expected to register with a GP.
18. Trent House is situated on the outskirts of Nottingham and has 20 single rooms. A key worker is allocated to each resident to discuss their progress and wellbeing. The key worker also ensures that residents adhere to their individual licence conditions and the rules of the approved premises.

Previous deaths at Trent House

19. Mr Edwards was the second resident of Trent House to die since December 2020. The previous resident died due to COVID-19. To the end of May 2024, one more resident of Trent House has died, as a result of a road traffic accident.

Key Events

20. On 6 September 2023, Mr Jack Edwards was sentenced to 26 weeks in prison for possession of a bladed article and sent to HMP Nottingham. Mr Edwards had previously served prison sentences for violent offences. On his second day in prison, Mr Edwards fought with another prisoner. He was charged with an offence against prison discipline.
21. Mr Edwards was allocated a community offender manager (COM). On 13 September, she noted that Mr Edwards was linked to a gang from the Nottingham area, and that this gang were rivals with three other local gangs. She noted that Mr Edwards also claimed to have issues with three additional gangs.
22. On 20 September, a resettlement officer completed a basic custody screen. Mr Edwards told her that he would be released from prison homeless. He said that he was not fit for work and would not have a job on release. Mr Edwards declined support with jobs or training and declined the offer of personal wellbeing support.
23. Mr Edwards told the resettlement officer that he had not been misusing illicit substances or alcohol immediately before he went to prison. (Mr Edwards had previously told prison staff that he used crack cocaine and MDMA (ecstasy) in the community.) He said that he intended to work with the community drug and alcohol services and was aware that this would be part of his licence conditions. The COM told us that Mr Edwards had previously engaged with community drug and alcohol services.
24. On 20 September, prison staff charged Mr Edwards with an offence against prison discipline when he attempted to assault another prisoner.
25. On 29 September, the COM completed a referral for Mr Edwards to live in an approved premises (AP) on his release.
26. On 2 October, Mr Edwards was transferred to HMP Ranby. Mr Edwards was allocated a prison offender manager.
27. On 13 October, Mr Edwards' mother telephoned prison staff and told them that Mr Edwards had been assaulted. Prison staff visited Mr Edwards and found that he had been injured in an apparent fight.
28. On 3 November, an Approved Premises Manager accepted Mr Edwards' at Trent House AP. He said that Mr Edwards would have to agree to substance misuse monitoring and room searches due to his history of violent offending and possessing knives.
29. Mr Edwards told his COM that he did not want to go back to Nottingham to live because he thought that he was at risk in the city from his links to gangs. She told us that she knew Mr Edwards had a history of gang association, and she therefore considered that this was potentially a genuine concern. She asked Mr Edwards for a list of names of people he felt he was at risk from, which she passed on to the Police Organised Crime Team and asked them to check and search on their intelligence systems.

30. On 23 November, the COM noted that an intelligence analyst from Nottinghamshire Police had checked their intelligence systems and found no intelligence for the names and groups provided. The police said that at that time they had no information to suggest that Mr Edwards was at risk. She told us that she reported this to her manager, and that they agreed that it did not impact Mr Edwards' suitability for Trent House.
31. On 30 November, Mr Edwards emailed his COM (through the Email a Prisoner system). Mr Edwards wrote that, because of his gang associations, he was concerned that he was being released to an AP in Nottingham. He explained that he felt depressed at this decision and now felt like taking his life.
32. The COM contacted a prison manager to ask for a welfare check to be completed. An officer visited Mr Edwards and noted that Mr Edwards said he had just been venting his frustrations as he did not want to be released back to Nottingham.
33. On 5 December, Mr Edwards was released on licence. His licence conditions required him to report, at 2.00pm, to his COM at the Mansfield Probation Office. Mr Edwards' licence required him to be at Trent House AP between 11.00pm and 6.00am every day, and to be tested for illicit drugs when required by his supervising officer.

Events of 5 December 2023

34. At about 2.00pm on 5 December, Mr Edwards met his COM at the Mansfield Probation Office for his initial appointment. Mr Edwards told her that he had met a friend before he came to the appointment and had drunk a pint of beer. She noted that Mr Edwards was under the influence of alcohol and suspected that he had drunk more than he said. However, she noted that Mr Edwards was coherent enough to go through the induction paperwork. She told Mr Edwards that he should not attend probation or AP appointments under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
35. Mr Edwards told his COM that he was concerned for his safety in Nottingham. She told him that the police had investigated his concerns and that there was no information indicating a risk to his safety. She told Mr Edwards that he needed to report any issues to Probation and the Police. She explained the AP rules, and Mr Edwards confirmed that he understood them.
36. The COM emailed the AP and told them that Mr Edwards should be at the AP by 5.00pm, and that he had had a drink before his appointment.
37. At about 5.00pm, a residential worker met Mr Edwards at Trent House. She said that Mr Edwards was under the influence of cannabis and alcohol and that she could smell both on him. Another residential support worker tested Mr Edwards for illicit drugs. (The results of this test were not available before Mr Edwards died.)
38. The first residential worker conducted the AP induction but noted that Mr Edwards was not paying attention and asked another probation service officer to assist. When she had completed the induction, she took Mr Edwards to his allocated room where he left his bags and followed her back to reception.

39. Mr Edwards told the residential worker that he was going out for food, and she reminded him that his curfew was at 11.00pm. A manager emailed the COM and said that she would issue Mr Edwards with a warning for attending under the influence and not engaging with the induction.
40. That evening, Mr Edwards had an altercation with a group of youths in the Sussex Street Skate Park, Nottingham. Mr Edwards sustained a head injury and was taken to hospital. A police detective inspector told us that the altercation was not gang related.
41. On 8 December, Mr Edwards died in hospital. Two teenagers were subsequently charged with his murder.

Contact with Mr Edwards' family

42. On the evening of 5 December, Trent House staff assisted Nottinghamshire Police to identify Mr Edwards' family. Police officers subsequently told Mr Edwards' family about the incident and supported them afterwards.

Support for residents and staff

43. After the assault on Mr Edwards, the Approved Premises Manager debriefed the staff who had met Mr Edwards at Trent House to ensure they had the opportunity to discuss any issues arising, and to offer support. He reminded them of the available support services.
44. After Mr Edwards' death the Approved Premises Manager posted notices informing other residents of Mr Edwards' death and offering support.
45. The COM said that she was well supported by her manager following Mr Edwards' death.

Post-mortem report

46. The post-mortem report and toxicology reports were not available when we issued our report. Nottinghamshire Police investigators told us that Mr Edwards died as a result of a head injury.

Findings

47. Mr Edwards had a history of violence in prison and in the community. In the time leading up to his release from prison he spoke of concerns that he would be a victim of violence in the community due to his affiliation with gangs in the Nottingham area. The COM appropriately reported these concerns to local police, whose intelligence did not identify any specific risk to Mr Edwards. Police investigators told us that the incident that led to Mr Edwards' death was not gang related. There is no evidence that Mr Edwards previously knew the youths with whom he had an altercation.
48. On the day of his release, Mr Edwards attended a probation appointment and then his AP induction seemingly under the influence of alcohol and, later, cannabis. AP and probation staff appropriately arranged for Mr Edwards to receive a warning for his behaviour.

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