

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr John Simpson, a prisoner at HMP Altcourse, on 17 December 2024

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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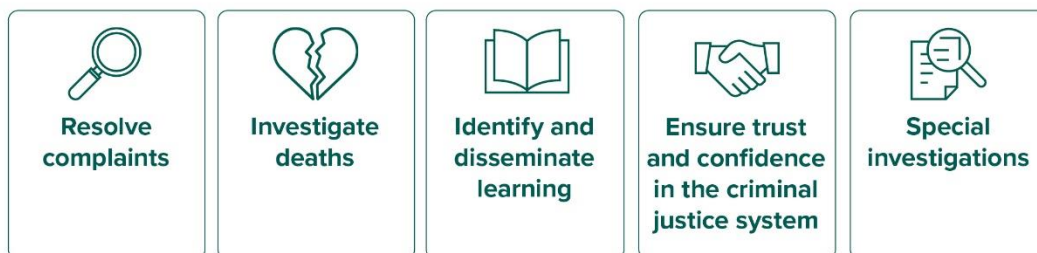
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OUR VISION

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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1. 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.
2. 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.
3. In May 2023, Mr John Simpson was sentenced to 18 years in prison for sex offences. He died in hospital of lung cancer on 17 December 2024, while a prisoner at HMP Altcourse. A spontaneous subdural haemorrhage (when bleeding occurs in the area around the brain due to damage to the blood vessels) was listed as a contributory factor. He was 76 years old. We offer our condolences to those who knew him.
4. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Simpson's clinical care at HMP Altcourse.
5. The clinical reviewer concluded that the care Mr Simpson received at Altcourse was of a good standard and equivalent to that he would have received in the community. He found that Mr Simpson's medical records included evidence of end-of-life care planning, and that healthcare interventions were thoroughly documented. He noted that the palliative care link nurse and the community palliative care team regularly monitored Mr Simpson. He also found that healthcare staff provided effective pain management and support in the prison's inpatient unit.
6. The PPO investigator investigated the non-clinical issues relating to Mr Simpson's care. We did not find any non-clinical issues of concern. We make no recommendations.
7. At the inquest, held on 8 January 2025, the Coroner concluded that Mr Simpson died from natural causes.
8. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

September 2025

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