

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Craig Lamb, on 11 September 2025, following his release from HMP Lincoln

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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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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Summary

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. Since 6 September 2021, the PPO has investigated post-release deaths that occur within 14 days of the person's release from prison.
3. 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.
4. Mr Craig Lamb died from heroin and cocaine toxicity on 11 September 2025, two days after his release from HMP Lincoln. He was 45 years old. We offer our condolences to those who knew him.
5. We did not identify any significant learning relating to the pre-release planning or post-release supervision of Mr Lamb.
6. We make no recommendations.

The Investigation Process

7. HMPPS notified us of Mr Lamb's death on 22 September 2025.
8. The PPO investigator obtained copies of relevant extracts from Mr Lamb's prison and probation records.
9. We informed HM Coroner for Bradford of the investigation. He gave us the results of the post-mortem examination. We have sent the Coroner a copy of this report.
10. The Ombudsman's office contacted Mr Lamb's partner to explain the investigation and to ask if she had any matters she wanted us to consider. She told us that Mr Lamb made a complaint about a previous probation officer and was not told the outcome. She asked why he was not told the outcome and what influence the complaint had over the decision to recall him. We have addressed why Mr Lamb was recalled in this report and have responded to the questions about the complaint in a separate letter.
11. We shared our initial report with HMPPS and the prison's healthcare provider, Nottingham Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. They found no factual inaccuracies.
12. We sent a copy of our initial report to Mr Lamb's partner. She raised a number of questions that do not impact on the factual accuracy of this report. We have addressed these in a separate letter.

Background Information

HMP Lincoln

13. HMP Lincoln is a category B prison, which predominantly serves the courts of Lincolnshire. It holds remanded and convicted adult/young adult male prisoners. Nottingham Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust provides health services and there is 24-hour nursing cover.

Probation Service

14. The Probation Service works with all individuals subject to custodial and community sentences. During a person's imprisonment, they oversee their sentence plan to assist in rehabilitation, prepare reports to advise the Parole Board and have links with local partnerships to which they refer people for resettlement services, where appropriate. Post-release, the Probation Service supervises people throughout their licence period and post-sentence supervision.

Key Events

Background

15. On 20 April 2023, Mr Craig Lamb was sentenced to three years in prison for robbery. On 21 June 2024, he was released.
16. On 21 August, Mr Lamb was recalled to prison for breaching his licence conditions after testing positive for drugs several times. He was arrested by police at his approved premises (AP, accommodation with probation staff onsite). On 22 August, he was taken to HMP Lincoln.
17. When Mr Lamb arrived at Lincoln, he told the prison's substance misuse services (SMS) that he did not have any current issues with drug use but had a history of crack cocaine and heroin use. Mr Lamb agreed to attend group support provided by the prison's SMS.
18. Throughout his time at Lincoln, Mr Lamb engaged with the SMS group support but did not receive any opioid substitute treatment (OST, such as methadone, a synthetic opioid used to treat heroin addiction) as he said he did not need it. Mr Lamb attended a Narcotics Anonymous group, understanding addiction group, and relapse prevention course.

Pre-release planning

19. On 5 August, Mr Lamb's community offender manager (COM) submitted an application to an AP for his release. This was accepted the next day.
20. On 19 August, Mr Lamb's COM completed a referral to the local council for longer term housing for him, under the duty to refer individuals who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.
21. On 26 August, the AP withdrew Mr Lamb's placement due to lack of capacity. The next day, the COM referred Mr Lamb for Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 (CAS3), which provides temporary housing for prison leavers.
22. On 3 September, Mr Lamb had a meeting with the housing support team to discuss his options. On 4 September, he had a phone call with his COM to discuss his release.
23. On 8 September, Mr Lamb's COM emailed Change, Grow, Live (CGL, the community SMS) to check whether Mr Lamb had been referred for an appointment on his release. CGL said that as Mr Lamb was only accessing group support when needed, and did not need a prescription, a referral had not been made.

Release from HMP Lincoln

24. On 9 September, Mr Lamb was released from Lincoln. An SMS worker offered him naloxone (a medication that can rapidly reverse opioid overdose) before he left, but he declined.

25. Mr Lamb had to travel to Dewsbury from Lincoln (around 79 miles), which took longer than expected so he was late to his initial probation appointment. When he arrived, his COM confirmed the details of his CAS3 accommodation, which was in Huddersfield (around 9 miles from the probation office) and supported him with finding the bus route. His COM asked Mr Lamb if he would be happy to work with CGL and he agreed, so his COM completed a referral. His COM arranged his next appointment for Friday 12 September, as Mr Lamb had a jobcentre appointment and would already be in Dewsbury.
26. On 12 September, Mr Lamb did not attend his probation appointment. His COM issued an enforcement letter along with a travel pass (in case he had not attended due to being unable to afford the travel between Huddersfield and Dewsbury).
27. On 16 September, Mr Lamb's COM discussed his missed appointment with their manager. They agreed that the COM would contact the accommodation to check he was still staying there.
28. On 17 September, the COM phoned Mr Lamb's accommodation officer. She said that she went to visit him earlier in the week and he had not been home, so she left a calling card for 11.00am that day.
29. At around 11.07am, the housing officer called the COM and said Mr Lamb was still not home, and everything was the same as the previous week in the property, but there were no clothes in the accommodation.
30. After speaking with their manager, the COM contacted the police for information and safeguarding checks on Mr Lamb. The police told the COM that Mr Lamb had died on 11 September.

Circumstances of Mr Lamb's death

31. On 11 September, at around 3.40pm, police received an emergency call from Yorkshire Ambulance Service, stating that Mr Lamb was in cardiac arrest from a suspected drugs overdose. Mr Lamb was at his partner's house. She had given him naloxone while awaiting the ambulance.
32. The ambulance and police attended and started CPR. Despite their efforts, Mr Lamb did not respond, and he was pronounced life extinct at 4.41pm.

Post-mortem report

33. The post-mortem report concluded that Mr Lamb died from heroin and cocaine toxicity.
34. The toxicology report found the blood levels of heroin and cocaine were both within the fatal ranges. There was also evidence that naloxone had been used in the hours before his death.

Findings

Substance misuse services

35. When Mr Lamb arrived at Lincoln, he said he had a history of crack cocaine and heroin use but was not currently on any opioid substitute therapy and did not need it. He agreed to engage with the group support offered by the prison's SMS. There were no recorded incidents of him being under the influence during his time at Lincoln.
36. After his release, Mr Lamb's COM referred him to the community SMS, CGL, with Mr Lamb's agreement. We are satisfied that he received appropriate support relating to his drug use.
37. We make no recommendations.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

May 2026

Inquest

38. At the inquest held on 4 June 2026, the Coroner concluded that Mr Lamb died from drug-related causes.

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