

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Frederick Mills, a resident of Peterborough Approved Premises, on 7 November 2024

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. If my office is to best assist HMPPS in ensuring the standard of care received by those within service remit is appropriate then our recommendations should be focused, evidenced and viable. This is especially the case if there is evidence of systemic process failures.
3. Mr Frederick Mills died in hospital on 7 November 2024 of aspiration pneumonia resulting from complications of a brain tumour, while a resident of Peterborough Approved Premises (AP). He was 67 years old. We offer our condolences to his friends and family.
4. Around two weeks after he was released from prison to Peterborough AP, Mr Mills was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with a brain tumour. Following his discharge from hospital, Mr Mills spent around four weeks in the AP before his final admission to hospital. Following his diagnosis, Mr Mills sometimes became confused and needed assistance with some daily tasks such as taking his medication. AP staff implemented additional welfare checks. They appropriately referred Mr Mills for a social care assessment, although the outcome of the assessment was outstanding when he died.

The Investigation Process

5. We were informed of Mr Mills' death on 12 November 2024.
6. The PPO investigator obtained copies of relevant extracts from Mr Mills' prison and probation records.
7. The Ombudsman's office contacted Mr Mills' next of kin, the CEO of a community interest company that had worked with him, to explain the investigation and to ask if she had any matters she wanted us to consider. (Community interest companies are not for profit organisations which support vulnerable people in the community.) Mr Mills' next of kin asked some questions that are outside of the remit of our investigation, and also about the social care he received at Peterborough AP.
8. We shared the initial report with HM Prison and Probation Service. They did not identify any factual inaccuracies.
9. We also shared the initial report with Mr Mills's next of kin. She identified one factual inaccuracy that we have amended in this report.

Background Information

Peterborough Approved Premises (AP)

10. Approved premises (formerly known as probation or bail hostels) accommodate those released from prison on licence and those directed to live there by the courts as a condition of bail. Their purpose is to provide an enhanced level of residential supervision in the community, as well as a supportive and structured environment. Residents are responsible for their own healthcare and are expected to register with a GP
11. HMPPS manages Peterborough AP. It has 27 single rooms and two double rooms. Meals are provided and there is a communal area for eating and socialising. Each resident has a key worker to oversee their progress and wellbeing and help them adhere to their individual licence conditions and the premises' rules. Staff are on duty 24-hours a day.

Previous deaths at Peterborough Approved Premises

12. There have been no deaths within the past five years at Peterborough AP.

Key Events

13. On 15 February 1989, Mr Frederick Mills was sentenced to life in prison for murder. He was released in April 2020, before being recalled in March 2023 for breaching his licence. Mr Mills was sent to HMP Bedford. Mr Mills was diagnosed with various mental health conditions.
14. On 4 May 2023, Mr Mills was transferred to HMP Wayland.
15. On 18 September 2024, Mr Mills was released from Wayland to Peterborough AP.

Peterborough Approved Premises

16. On 28 September 2024, Mr Mills was ill and remained in bed all day. Staff monitored him. This continued over the next two days.
17. On 2 October, Mr Mills complained of a pain in his head and was admitted to Peterborough City Hospital. Following various tests, Mr Mills was diagnosed with a brain tumour.
18. On 4 October, probation staff completed a Social Care Act referral for Mr Mills, to better understand his support needs following his diagnosis. The referral highlighted that Mr Mills' symptoms included dizziness, sickness and confusion and that these might worsen as his illness progressed.
19. On 5 October, Mr Mills returned to Peterborough AP. He had several GP and hospital appointments over the following weeks, which a support worker from a community interest company accompanied him to. Alongside this, AP staff often had to support or remind Mr Mills to take his medication and other residents sometimes helped him at meal times.
20. On 11 October, Mr Mills completed a self-referral to RECONNECT (RECONNECT supports people leaving prison to access and engage with healthcare services in the community).
21. On 12 October, AP staff requested an expedited adult social care referral. They highlighted Mr Mills' deteriorating condition, including that he was struggling with mobility and could become extremely disoriented. They also noted that the AP was not a suitable environment to meet his medical needs. AP staff began to make additional welfare checks.
22. On 14 October, AP staff sent a letter to the local GP to request Mr Mills be referred to Joint Emergency Team (JET, a healthcare service that provides urgent care for people in their homes) for an assessment.
23. On 16 October, a social worker assessed Mr Mills. The outcome of this assessment and other referrals were awaited when Mr Mills died.
24. On 21 October, a residential worker at Peterborough AP updated Mr Mills' support plan. This identified his diagnosis, that he needed support to take medication and that AP staff were making additional checks on him.

25. In the week of 28 October, Mr Mills made three visits into town. AP staff recorded that he seemed quite bright, although on one day they noted that he was a little confused.
26. On 3 November, Mr Mills was taken to Peterborough City Hospital following a fall in his room. Due to his deteriorating condition, Mr Mills remained in hospital as an inpatient.

Circumstances of Mr Mills' death

27. On 7 November, Mr Mills died at Peterborough City Hospital in the early hours of the morning.

Contact with Mr Mills' family

28. Mr Mills did not have contact with his family and named a member of staff from a community interest company as his next of kin. We do not know how they were told of his death.

Post-mortem report

29. Mr Mills died in hospital whilst receiving treatment for his brain tumour and as such the hospital provided the cause of death. There was no post-mortem examination. The cause of death was recorded as aspiration pneumonia (when food, liquid, or saliva is inhaled into the lungs instead of being swallowed properly, leading to infection and inflammation), resulting from complications of a brain tumour.

Findings

30. Mr Mills was in relatively good health until he was diagnosed with a brain tumour around two weeks after he was released from prison to Peterborough AP.
31. Following his diagnosis, Mr Mills had additional care needs that meant that AP accommodation might no longer be appropriate. He was still relatively mobile, but sometimes became confused and required help with taking his medication or at mealtimes. The AP team appropriately referred Mr Mills to social services to assess and identify his social care needs, although the outcome of these referrals was outstanding when he died.

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October 2025

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