

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Tony Bacon, on 31 March 2025, following his release from HMP Leeds

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

Third Floor, 10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf, London E14 4PU

Email: mail@ppo.gov.uk
Web: www.ppo.gov.uk

T | 020 7633 4100

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



© Crown copyright, 2026

This report is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

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 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. Since 6 September 2021, the PPO has investigated post-release deaths that occur within 14 days of the person's release from prison.
4. Mr Tony Bacon died from synthetic cannabinoid toxicity and myocardial fibrosis on 31 March 2025, following his release from HMP Leeds on 28 March 2025. He was 52 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 Bacon. We make no recommendations.

The Investigation Process

6. HMPPS notified us of Mr Bacon's death on 14 April 2025.
7. The PPO investigator obtained copies of relevant extracts from Mr Bacon's prison and probation records.
8. Ms Randhawa interviewed Mr Bacon's Community Offender Manager on 16 June 2025.
9. We informed HM Coroner for Wakefield 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 initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

Background Information

HMP Leeds

11. HMP Leeds is a category B reception and resettlement prison for male prisoners. It is managed by HMPPS.

Probation Service

12. 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

13. On 5 February 2025, Mr Tony Bacon was remanded to HMP Hull for racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating.
14. Mr Bacon had a history of poor mental health, alcohol and drug use.
15. While at Hull, Mr Bacon engaged with the substance misuse service and completed an alcohol detoxification programme. He said he used synthetic cannabinoids in the community and wanted support while he was in prison. However, during his initial appointment, he said he no longer wanted to engage. The recovery worker spoke to Mr Bacon about harm reduction, tolerance levels and poly-drug use, and then discharged him from the service.
16. On 19 February, Mr Bacon was convicted and sentenced to six weeks in prison for assault. He was sent to HMP Leeds. He was released two days later due to the time he had already spent in prison on remand.
17. Mr Bacon attended his probation induction appointment on the day of his release, but he did not engage with the Probation Service thereafter.
18. On 6 March, Mr Bacon was recalled to prison for breaching his licence conditions and committing a new offence. He was sentenced to eight weeks in prison for a public order offence. He was sent back to Leeds. He was due to be released on 28 March.
19. At his reception health screen, a nurse noted that Mr Bacon had a history of substance use and had been diagnosed with drug induced psychosis. The nurse referred him to the prison's substance misuse team and mental health team.
20. On 7 March, a substance misuse recovery worker met with Mr Bacon to conduct an initial assessment. Mr Bacon declined support from the service. The recovery worker gave him harm reduction advice and told him to self-refer if he needed support in the future.
21. Later that day, the mental health team reviewed Mr Bacon's referral. They noted that he had previously received psychiatric care and was not currently taking any medication to manage his mental health issues.
22. On 10 March, a mental health nurse met with Mr Bacon to conduct a triage assessment. The nurse noted that Mr Bacon was struggling to sleep. He said he wanted to be prescribed olanzapine (antipsychotic medication), as he was previously prescribed this in 2022. The nurse told Mr Bacon that olanzapine was not prescribed for sleep issues, and a psychiatrist would need to see him before this medication could be considered. Mr Bacon walked out of the appointment and said it was a waste of time. The nurse discharged him from their service. Mr Bacon was not prescribed medication for his mental health prior to his release.

Pre-release planning

23. On 11 March, Mr Bacon's case was allocated a Community Offender Manager (COM).
24. The next day, the COM wrote to Mr Bacon using the Email a Prisoner service to introduce herself and asked him if he had any issues or queries. Mr Bacon did not reply.
25. On 14 March, an officer from the prison resettlement team and the COM discussed Mr Bacon's accommodation issues by email. They agreed that the officer would refer Mr Bacon to Commissioned Rehabilitative Services (CRS – provides flexible, responsive services to help break the cycle of reoffending) for support with his personal wellbeing and accommodation, and the COM would complete a Duty to Refer (DTR – a referral to the local authority if someone is homeless or threatened with homelessness) and Community Accommodation Service Tier 3 referral (CAS3 – provides short term accommodation to prison leavers) because Mr Bacon was going to be released with no accommodation. During interview, the COM said she was unable to book a meeting with Mr Bacon as there were no visit or video-link slots available, and there was not sufficient time.
26. Later that day, the officer referred Mr Bacon to Ingenus for personal wellbeing support and to St Giles Trust for accommodation support. Both referrals remained open for Mr Bacon to access in the community upon his release.
27. On 17 March, the COM completed a DTR to Wakefield council.
28. On 20 March, the resettlement team arranged an appointment for Mr Bacon at Wakefield Job Centre for 28 March.
29. Later that day, Mr Bacon attended an appointment with Ingenus for personal wellbeing support, but he did not engage during the appointment.
30. On 24 March, Mr Bacon attended an appointment with St Giles Trust to discuss his accommodation issues.
31. On 25 March, the COM completed a CAS3 referral for Mr Bacon. During interview, she told the investigator that the referral was not accepted as there were no bedspaces available in the area.
32. On 25 March, an officer from the prison resettlement team met with Mr Bacon to encourage him to engage with Ingenus. She also tried to motivate him to visit the prison's departure lounge (a service that offers guidance and support to individuals on their day of release), but Mr Bacon said he might be busy if his friends were picking him up.

Post-release management

33. On 28 March, Mr Bacon was released from Leeds. He did not have a naloxone (reduces the effects of opiate overdose) kit.
34. At 11.00am, Mr Bacon attended his induction appointment at Wakefield probation office with his COM. She asked Mr Bacon why he had not responded to her email.

Mr Bacon said he was busy in prison and did not have time to respond. He said he had consumed alcohol and used synthetic cannabinoids prior to his appointment. The COM noted that Mr Bacon was eager to leave his appointment. She encouraged him to attend the council to present as homeless, but he said he could not as he was busy and he would go to the council on Monday. The COM gave Mr Bacon his next appointment for 1 April as she was concerned that he did not have accommodation.

35. After the appointment, the COM spoke to her Senior Probation Officer (SPO) about her concerns. She told her SPO that Mr Bacon said he had consumed alcohol and synthetic cannabinoids prior to his appointment. The SPO said this should be closely monitored.
36. Mr Bacon was due to attend an appointment at Wakefield Job Centre after his induction appointment, but he did not attend.

Circumstances of Mr Bacon's death

37. At approximately 8.00am, on 31 March, an NHS worker noticed a man at the bottom of a flight of stairs at the exterior of the building. After observing him for approximately 20 minutes, she called an ambulance. When paramedics arrived, they found Mr Bacon sitting crossed legged with his torso bent forward and his head on his legs. They found vomit containing blood on him. He was wearing prison issued clothing and was sitting on cardboard, with drug paraphernalia located around him, including a large bag of synthetic cannabinoids. Paramedics noted that rigor mortis was present and pronounced life extinct at 8.27am.

Post-mortem report

38. The post-mortem report concluded that Mr Bacon died from synthetic cannabinoid toxicity and myocardial fibrosis (the buildup of scar tissue in the heart muscle).

Findings

Accommodation

39. Mr Bacon was released with no accommodation. The pre-release team at Leeds and his COM referred him for support to help him with obtain suitable accommodation, however he did not engage.

Substance misuse services

40. Mr Bacon had a history of substance use. During his most recent sentence, he engaged with the substance misuse service at Hull to complete an alcohol detoxification programme.
41. At Leeds, Mr Bacon said he had regularly used synthetic cannabinoids in the community but declined ongoing support for his drug use. A recovery worker gave him harm reduction advice and then closed the referral. Because Mr Bacon did not engage with the substance misuse service in prison, he was not referred to the community service on release.
42. The substance misuse service team at Leeds told us that take-home naloxone kits are offered at reception to prisoners who use opiates. This includes those on an opiate treatment prescription, those with a history of opiate use, prisoners who will be associating with opiate users, and prisoners using synthetic cannabinoids due to the risk of synthetic opiates being mixed in. A member of the substance misuse team is present at reception on the day of release to provide harm reduction advice and nasal naloxone. They told us that Mr Bacon was made aware he could obtain a naloxone kit on release, but he did not request one.
43. We spoke to the Head of Drug Strategy at Leeds, who said that at the time of Mr Bacon's release, the prison did not have a naloxone policy in place. There is now a naloxone policy in draft.
44. During interview, the COM, said Mr Bacon had previously declined support from the community substance misuse service, so she did not have his consent to make a new referral before his release on 28 March. She said he was very resistant to engaging with services, but that she planned to motivate him to do so in the coming weeks. We make no formal recommendation, as we are satisfied that prison and probation staff took all reasonable and appropriate steps to support Mr Bacon.

Good practice

45. The departure lounge at Leeds is a valuable resource for individuals on their day of release. By providing practical support and linking individuals with housing, benefits, and community services, it helps ensure a smoother transition back into the community. We consider this to be an example of good practice.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

November 2025

Inquest

At the inquest held on 27 January 2026, the Coroner concluded that Mr Bacon died by misadventure.

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Third Floor, 10 South Colonnade
Canary Wharf, London E14 4PU

Email: mail@ppo.gov.uk
Web: www.ppo.gov.uk

T | 020 7633 4100