

A Report by the
Prisons and
Probation
Ombudsman
Nigel Newcomen CBE

**Investigation into the death of a man on 23 July 2013,
a resident of Norfolk Park Approved Premises,
Sheffield.**

Our Vision

*'To be a leading, independent investigatory body,
a model to others, that makes a significant contribution to
safer, fairer custody and offender supervision'*

This is the investigation report into the death on 23 July 2013, of a man, a resident of Norfolk Park Approved Premises, Sheffield. The man died in a road traffic accident. He was 30 years old. I offer my condolences to the man's family and friends.

The investigation was carried out by an investigator for the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman. Staff at Norfolk Park and the South Yorkshire Probation Trust cooperated fully with the investigation.

On 2 May 2013, the man was released from HMP Wymott on licence. As part of his licence conditions, he was required to live at Norfolk Park. The man made good progress at the approved premises. He complied with everything that was required of him, and was popular with both staff, and other residents. The manager regarded him as a positive influence.

At 10:30am on 23 July 2013, the man was driving from Norfolk Park to Barnsley. At 11:00am, he collided with an oncoming car, sustaining fatal injuries and died at the scene. The East Midlands Serious Collision Unit, which has investigated the incident, concluded that the man had lost control of his vehicle. No traces of alcohol or drugs were found during a post-mortem toxicology examination.

The man had permission to keep and drive his car and I am satisfied that the man's death resulted from a tragic accident.

This version of my report, published on my website, has been amended to remove the names of the man who died and those of staff and prisoners involved in my investigation.

Nigel Newcomen CBE
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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SUMMARY

1. The man had been a resident of Norfolk Park Approved Premises since 2 May 2013, and had made good progress there. He had permission to keep and drive a car. On 23 July, he was driving from the approved premises in Sheffield to Barnsley, when he collided with another car and died at the scene. We are satisfied that this was a tragic accident which staff at the approved premises could have done nothing to prevent.

THE INVESTIGATION PROCESS

2. The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman is obliged by his terms of reference to investigate the deaths of all residents of approved premises. As part of the investigation into the man's death, the investigator visited Norfolk Park and spoke to two members of staff. One of our family liaison officers spoke to the man's family, who had no questions for the investigation to consider.

NORFOLK PARK APPROVED PREMISES, SHEFFIELD

3. Approved premises (formerly known as probation and bail hostels) accommodate offenders 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.
4. Norfolk Park is the largest of three approved premises in the Sheffield area, managed by the South Yorkshire Probation Trust. It provides accommodation for up to 33 adult males arranged over three separate areas. In the main building there is accommodation for up to 23 residents, communal areas for dining and socialising and areas set aside for group work. There are two further separate buildings, each of which houses up to five residents. The man was allocated to room 19 in one of the smaller buildings. Each resident is allocated a key worker, with whom the resident discusses their progress and well-being. The key worker also ensures that residents adhere to their individual licence conditions and the rules of the approved premises. Norfolk Park is staffed 24 hours a day by probation employees.

KEY EVENTS

5. The man was sentenced to 78 months imprisonment for sexual offences at Lancaster Crown Court on 13 March 2006. The man progressed well throughout his time in prison and was released on licence on 8 June 2009 (offenders serving a custodial sentence of 12 months or more are initially released from prison subject to a number of conditions). After failing to comply with his licence conditions he was recalled to prison on 24 August.
6. On 2 May 2013, the man was released on licence to Norfolk Park Approved Premises, Sheffield. A residential support worker saw him when he arrived and explained that under the terms of his licence he would be expected to reside at an approved premises until 2 September 2015. She also explained that while he was a resident at Norfolk Park, he would be subject to a curfew between 9.00pm and 7.00am. They discussed the licence conditions and the man confirmed that he understood that he should not have any contact with his victims or their families, or enter the Selby area of North Yorkshire without the permission of his supervising probation officer.
7. The residential support worker noted that the man had arrived at Norfolk Park in his own car. She confirmed that he was authorised to drive the vehicle while on licence, and held all necessary documentation to enable him to do so legally.
8. On 8 May, the man met his key worker. The man asked for home leave to attend a family function (residents can apply to stay away from the hostel for a period of up to five consecutive days). The key worker agreed to discuss this with his supervising probation officer. The key worker asked the man about his time in custody and his plans for the future. He told the key worker that while he was in prison he had discussed a possible job opportunity with the maintenance team of West Coast Rail but he first needed a CSCS card (construction skills certification scheme). After the meeting, the key worker arranged the necessary training for the man and he attained CSCS certification.
9. As a condition of residency at Norfolk Park, and as part of his licence conditions, the man was required to be drug and alcohol free and to be subject to random testing. On 31 May, the man tested negative for drugs and alcohol.
10. In the weeks that followed, the man continued to make good progress. He mixed well with other residents and complied with the rules of Norfolk Park, and the conditions of his licence. On 21 June, to reflect the efforts he had made, the man's curfew time was extended from 9:00pm to 10:00pm.
11. On 2 July, the man told the residential support worker that he had become aware of an employment opportunity with West Coast Rail, but that he would need to transfer to an approved premises in the Lancaster area. The residential support worker said that she would talk to the supervising probation officer about this. Shortly before he met the residential support worker, the man had learnt that his application for home leave had been refused. He said that he would discuss both matters with the supervising probation officer at a meeting that had been arranged between them for 4

July. After the meeting on 4 July, the supervising probation officer noted that she would attempt to secure a place for the man in the area of his choice within a few weeks.

12. At 10.30am on 23 July, the man left Norfolk Park in his car to travel to Barnsley. The journey had been authorised by staff. At 11.00am, while travelling on the A57 towards Derbyshire, he collided on a bend with an oncoming car. The collision caused significant damage to the man's vehicle leaving him with fatal injuries. The man was pronounced dead at the scene by paramedics from South Yorkshire Ambulance Service at 11.30am. His body was taken to Medico Legal Centre, Sheffield.
13. At 11.00pm, a member of staff at Norfolk Park noted that the man had not returned and this was past his 10.00pm curfew. As this was unusual, the member of staff became concerned for his safety and tried to contact him on his mobile telephone but there was no answer.
14. South Yorkshire Police had contacted the man's mother later that day to inform her of her son's death. At 11:48pm, she attended Medico Legal Centre to identify her son's body.
15. The member of staff contacted South Yorkshire police as she was becoming increasingly concerned about the man. The police said they had no record of any contact with the man. The member of staff then contacted hospitals throughout South Yorkshire and in Lancaster, and South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Lancashire police forces, to try to locate the man. While the member of staff was on the telephone, a voicemail message was left asking her to contact Derbyshire police who had information about the man.
16. At 1.30am on 24 July, while the member of staff was attempting to contact Derbyshire police, a police sergeant with South Yorkshire police arrived at Norfolk Park and informed the member of staff that the man had been killed in a road traffic accident the previous morning.
17. A person from South Yorkshire Probation Trust spoke to the man's stepfather to offer condolences on behalf of the staff at Norfolk Park. The man's stepfather visited Norfolk Park with the man's brother to collect the man's property. The manager of Norfolk Park broke the news of the man's death to other residents. The man's funeral took place on 6 August and the South Yorkshire Probation Trust contributed to the costs in line with national guidance.
18. A toxicology report, conducted as part of a post-mortem examination, did not find any trace of alcohol or illegal drugs in the man's body.
19. We are satisfied that the man's death was a tragic accident and entirely outside the control of staff at the approved premises. Staff at Norfolk Park had checked that the man was allowed to drive, and he had been permitted to be outside the approved premises at the time the accident took place.