

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr John Charles Bradford a prisoner at HMP Stafford on 5 April 2019

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

Our Vision

To carry out independent investigations to make custody and community supervision safer and fairer.

Our Values

We are:

Impartial: *we do not take sides*

Respectful: *we are considerate and courteous*

Inclusive: *we value diversity*

Dedicated: *we are determined and focused*

Fair: *we are honest and act with integrity*



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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. Our office carries out investigations to understand what happened and identify how the organisations whose actions we oversee can improve their work in the future.
3. Mr John Bradford, who was 76 years old, died of bowel cancer in hospital on 5 April 2019 while a prisoner at HMP Stafford. We offer our condolences to Mr Bradford's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care that Mr Bradford received after his cancer diagnosis was of a high standard and equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. He has made one recommendation about Mr Bradford's initial suspected cancer referral.
5. We did not find any non-clinical issues of concern.

Recommendation

- **The Head of Healthcare should investigate what happened to Mr Bradford's original two-week referral on 31 May 2016 and ascertain if any organisational learning has been identified.**

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

Investigation Process

6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer, to review Mr Bradford's clinical care at HMP Stafford. The clinical review is attached to this report at Annex 1.
7. The PPO has investigated the non-clinical issues in Mr Bradford's care, including his location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts, liaison with his family and whether compassionate release was considered.
8. Our family liaison officer wrote to Mr Bradford's next of kin, his daughter, to explain the investigation. She did not respond.
9. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

Previous deaths at Stafford

9. There have been nine deaths from natural causes and one non-natural death at HMP Stafford in the last two years. There are no similarities between our findings in the investigation of Mr Bradford's death and the other deaths.

Key Events

10. Mr John Bradford was serving time in prison for sexual offences and was transferred to HMP Stafford on 29 April 2016.
11. In May 2016, Mr Bradford complained of rectal bleeding. On 31 May, a prison GP issued medication to ease constipation and referred him urgently to hospital with suspected cancer, under the NHS pathway, which requires patients with suspected cancer to be seen by a specialist within two weeks. However, on 19 June, Mr Bradford complained of bleeding haemorrhoids. Prison staff arranged for him to go to hospital where it was noted that he was on the waiting list for investigations into rectal bleeding. On 21 June, the prison GP completed another hospital referral.
12. Mr Bradford attended hospital on 7 July and hospital specialists started investigations. He was diagnosed with bowel cancer in August. Chemoradiotherapy treatment was considered appropriate and began in October for five weeks.

2017

13. In January 2017, Mr Bradford had surgery to remove the cancer in his rectum and had a stoma connected to his bowel. In February, Mr Bradford began his first of four cycles of chemotherapy. Prison healthcare staff provided wound care, gave him pain relief and prescribed medication to relieve his symptoms. He finished his fourth cycle in August.

2018

14. In April 2018, Mr Bradford had an operation to repair a hernia. However, there were complications with the surgery and he needed extensive stoma and hernia wound care. Prison staff therefore arranged for Mr Bradford to transfer to the 24-hour inpatient unit at HMP Dovegate for post-operative wound management. When his wounds had sufficiently healed, he returned to Stafford on 4 June. Prison healthcare staff saw him frequently and sent him to hospital for treatment when his symptoms worsened. Specialists regularly reviewed him.

2019

15. In February 2019, hospital specialists conducted tests and told Mr Bradford that his bowel cancer had spread and palliative care began. Prison healthcare staff supported Mr Bradford.
16. In March, Mr Bradford told healthcare staff that he had breathing difficulties. They arranged for him to go to hospital, where his condition deteriorated. Mr Bradford died at 5.40am on 5 April.
17. Prison staff started to process the application paperwork for his early release on compassionate grounds. However, he died before a final decision was made.

18. There was no post-mortem examination but the Coroner established that the cause of Mr Bradford's death was metastatic bowel cancer. Mr Bradford also had pneumonia and had had a previous pulmonary embolism (a blocked blood vessel in the lungs) which contributed to but did not cause his death.

Sue McAllister CB
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

October 2019

