

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

# Independent investigation into the death of Mr Peter York, a prisoner at HMP Whatton, on 22 June 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. We carry out investigations to understand what happened and identify how the organisations whose actions we oversee can improve their work in the future.
3. Mr Peter York, who was 66 years old, died of heart disease on 22 June 2019, at HMP Whatton. We offer our condolences to Mr York's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care that Mr York received was of a good standard and equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. She made no recommendations about clinical issues.
5. We did not find any non-clinical issues of concern.

## Investigation Process

6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr York's clinical care at HMP Whatton. The clinical review is attached to this report as Annex 1.
7. The PPO has investigated the non-clinical issues in Mr York's care, including his location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts, liaison with his family and whether compassionate release was considered.
8. We wrote to Mr York's sister to explain the investigation and to ask whether she had any matters she wanted the investigation to consider. She did not respond to our letter.
9. Mr York's family received a copy of the draft report. Mr York's family also raised a question that did not impact on the factual accuracy of this report and has been addressed through separate correspondence.
10. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS pointed out no factual inaccuracies.

## Previous deaths at Whatton

11. There have been 14 deaths from natural causes at HMP Whatton in the last two years. There are no similarities between our findings in the investigation of Mr York's death and the other deaths.

## Key Events

12. On 25 September 2014, Mr Peter York was sentenced to 11 years, six months in prison for sexual offences. On 16 January 2015, he was transferred to HMP Whatton. Mr York did not have any medical concerns when he arrived at Whatton.
13. In March 2019, Mr York was diagnosed with bladder cancer and had an operation to remove the tumour the following month. Not all the tumour could be removed. Mr York was discharged from hospital and was sent back to Whatton the next day.
14. On 30 April, Mr York complained of being in severe pain. He was admitted to hospital for review. A scan showed that he had a fracture to the pelvis, which was because the cancer had spread to his bones. Mr York received a course of radiotherapy treatment.
15. On his return to prison, Mr York was moved to A8 wing, which offered more support to prisoners with mobility issues. He was provided with specialist equipment for his medical needs.
16. On 21 June, staff submitted a compassionate release application. The application was rejected because Mr York was too ill to travel and he had expressed a wish to stay at Whatton.
17. On 22 June, it was confirmed that Mr York had died.
18. The post-mortem examination gave Mr York's cause of death as:
  - 1a) Ischaemic heart disease,
  - 1b) Transitional cell carcinoma urinary bladder.

**Lisa Burrell**  
**Assistant Ombudsman**

**December 2019**