

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Frank Snowden, a prisoner at HMP Leyhill, on 20 February 2020

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*



© Crown copyright 2020

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

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. 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 Frank Snowden died of an infective exacerbation (a sudden worsening) of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease on 20 February 2020 while a prisoner at HMP Leyhill. He was 78 years old. We offer our condolences to his family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care that Mr Snowden received at Leyhill was of a good standard and equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. She made a recommendation about a clinical issue which is not directly related to Mr Snowden's death but which the Head of Healthcare will need to address.
5. We did not identify any non-clinical issues of concern and make no recommendations.

Investigation Process

6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Snowden's clinical care at HMP Leyhill. The clinical review is attached to this report at Annex 1.
7. The PPO investigator has investigated the non-clinical issues in Mr Snowden's care, including his location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts, liaison with his family and whether compassionate release was considered.
8. We shared the initial report with the prison service. There were no factual inaccuracies.
9. This version of our report, published on the website, has been amended to remove the names of staff and prisoners involved in my investigation.

Previous deaths at Leyhill

10. There were three deaths from natural causes at HMP Leyhill in the two years before Mr Snowden's death and one further death from natural causes after Mr Snowden's death. There are no significant similarities between our findings in the investigation of Mr Snowden's death and the other deaths.

Key Events

11. On 14 April 1992, Mr Frank Snowden was sentenced to life in prison for attempted murder. On 1 March 2010, he was transferred to HMP Leyhill.
12. On 27 December 2012, Mr Snowden went to hospital because he was short of breath and had chest pain. Hospital staff diagnosed him with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD, a lung disease). Mr Snowden said that he had been a heavy smoker since the age of fifteen.
13. On 27 June 2019, a prison GP reviewed Mr Snowden after he had frequently attended hospital with exacerbations of COPD and noted that he now had end-stage COPD and that he was not suitable for long term oxygen therapy because he continued to smoke.
14. On 17 February 2020, a nurse saw Mr Snowden because he was feeling unwell. Mr Snowden's blood oxygen saturation level was low, so he was taken to hospital by ambulance. On 20 February 2020, Mr Snowden died in hospital of a sudden worsening of COPD.

Caroline Mills
Assistant Ombudsman

July 2020

Annexes

1. Clinical review

