

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

# Independent investigation into the death of Mr Dean Hunt a prisoner at HMP Whatton on 23 April 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*



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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 Dean Hunt, who was 41 years old, died in hospital from cancer on 23 April 2020, while a prisoner at HMP Whatton. We offer our condolences to Mr Hunt's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Hunt received at Whatton was equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community.
5. We found no non-clinical issues of concern. We make no recommendations.

## Investigation Process

6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Hunt's clinical care at HMP Whatton.
7. The PPO investigator has investigated the non-clinical issues in Mr Hunt's care, including his location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts, liaison with his family and whether compassionate release was considered.
8. The PPO's family liaison officer wrote to Mr Hunt's next of kin, to explain the investigation. He 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 Whatton

10. Mr Hunt was the 12th prisoner to die at Whatton since April 2018. All the previous deaths were from natural causes. There are no similarities between these deaths and Mr Hunt's.

## Key Events

11. On 4 August 2017, Mr Dean Hunt was sentenced to eight years imprisonment for sexual offences. He was sent to HMP Whatton on 29 March 2018.
12. On 11 December 2019, Mr Hunt went to see a nurse and complained of stomach pains after eating. A prison GP saw him on 18 December and prescribed some gastric medication and asked for blood tests to be carried out.
13. On 8 January 2020, Mr Hunt saw a nurse again, and said he was not eating and was constantly vomiting. She noted no weight loss. When he saw the GP on 15 January he had lost 2.5 kg. The GP consulted with the hospital and made a fast track cancer referral for Mr Hunt.
14. Mr Hunt had a gastroscopy procedure (an internal examination with a flexible tube and camera which is passed down the throat to the stomach) on 27 January. This revealed no cancer. However, a follow up chest X-ray on 6 February, showed possible cancer, and an appointment was made for Mr Hunt to have a CT scan on 10 February. He was unable to go through with the scan as he found it too claustrophobic (a CT scan requires the person to lie still in a scanner while X-rays are taken) and he was taken back to the prison without it being completed.
15. However, later that day, he collapsed and was taken back to hospital, where he stayed until 20 February. A scan was carried out during this time, and Mr Hunt was diagnosed with lung and kidney cancer.
16. After his diagnosis, Mr Hunt's condition declined quite rapidly and the damage to his lungs meant that he needed supplementary oxygen. On 6 March, his condition deteriorated and he was taken to hospital. He remained there until he died on 23 April. While in hospital, he tested negative for Covid-19.
17. The post-mortem examination showed that Mr Hunt's cause of death was carcinomatosis (a general spread of cancer through the body or large region of the body), caused by carcinoma (cancer) of the kidney.

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