

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Palwinder Dhillon a prisoner at HMP Bullingdon on 1 May 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. 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 Palwinder Dhillon died in HMP Bullingdon on 1 May 2020 of hepatocellular carcinoma (primary liver cancer). He also had hepatitis C-related cirrhosis and diabetes mellitus which did not cause, but contributed to his death. Mr Dhillon was 81 years old. I offer my condolences to Mr Dhillon's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Dhillon received at Bullingdon was equivalent to that he could have expected to receive in the community. She made no recommendations.
5. We found no non-clinical issues of concern.
6. This version of my report, published on my website, has been amended to remove the names of staff and prisoners involved in my investigation.

The Investigation Process

7. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer, to review Mr Dhillon's clinical care at Bullingdon.
8. The PPO investigator has investigated non-clinical issues, including Mr Dhillon's location, the security arrangements for his hospital escort/s, liaison with his family and whether compassionate release was considered.
9. The PPO family liaison officer wrote to Mr Dhillon's next of kin, his daughter, to explain the investigation. She did not have any queries.

Previous deaths at HMP Bullingdon

10. Mr Dhillon was the eighth prisoner to die at HMP Bullingdon since May 2018. Of these deaths, five were from natural causes and two were self-inflicted. There are no similarities between our findings in the investigation into Mr Dhillon's death and our investigation findings for the previous deaths. Two deaths occurred after Mr Dhillon's death and these are under investigation.

Key Events

11. Mr Palwinder Dhillon was sent to prison in 2004 for murder. He transferred to HMP Bullingdon on 16 July 2013. He had a history of an enlarged spleen, hepatitis C (a virus that infects the liver), and cirrhosis (liver scarring and damage).
12. In July 2017, Mr Dhillon complained of a swollen stomach. He was taken to hospital and after tests, the hospital consultant hepatologist said that they had successfully managed to cure his hepatitis C. However, as the scan also showed a possible focal liver lesion, a CT (computerised tomography) scan was arranged.
13. In October 2017, Mr Dhillon returned to hospital for further tests. The CT scan showed signs of hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer). A hospital consultant diagnosed incurable liver cancer and arranged for Mr Dhillon to start chemotherapy in February 2018.
14. In February 2018, Mr Dhillon was diagnosed with diabetes after blood tests showed abnormal sugar levels. Healthcare staff offered advice about his diet and lowering his sugar levels and prescribed metformin (oral medication that helps control blood sugar levels). He had two further rounds of chemotherapy in May and December 2019.
15. On 29 April 2020, Mr Dhillon said he did not want anyone to resuscitate him if his heart or breathing stopped and signed an order to that effect.
16. Healthcare staff arranged for Mr Dhillon to be moved to the inpatient unit at Bullingdon on 29 April when his health deteriorated. Mr Dhillon had abdominal discomfort and struggled to eat. He was prescribed supplementary drinks and a care plan was started for his end of life care.
17. Mr Dhillon's condition deteriorated rapidly and he died in Bullingdon on 1 May.

Cause of death

18. The Coroner accepted the cause of death provided by a prison doctor and no post-mortem examination was carried out. The doctor gave Mr Dhillon's cause of death as hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer), caused by hepatitis C related cirrhosis (liver disease). He also had diabetes mellitus which did not cause, but contributed to his death.

Sue McAllister, CB
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

November 2020

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