

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

# Independent investigation into the death of Mr Peter Worley, a prisoner at HMP Littlehey, on 21 November 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 Peter Worley, who was 86 years old, died from bronchopneumonia on 21 November 2020, at HMP Littlehey. We offer our condolences to Mr Worley's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that overall the clinical care Mr Worley received at Littlehey was equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. She found some areas of good practice and that care was responsive to Mr Worley's needs. However, she made three recommendations. These are not related to the cause of his death, but one is included in this report because of the wider significance it has in the context of caring for an ageing prison population.
5. We found no non-clinical issues of concern.

## Recommendations

- The Governor and Head of Healthcare should ensure that there is an escalation process in place for those prisoners whose needs would be better met by a transfer to a prison with 24-hour healthcare.

## Investigation Process

6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Worley's clinical care at HMP Littlehey.
7. The PPO investigator has investigated the non-clinical issues in Mr Worley'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 Worley's next of kin, his wife, to explain the investigation. She did not respond.
9. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS found no factual inaccuracies. Their action plan is attached to this report.

## Previous deaths at Littlehey

10. Mr Worley was the 17th prisoner to die at Littlehey since November 2018. One of the previous deaths was self-inflicted. All the others were from natural causes. There are no significant similarities between this death and the previous ones.

## Key Events

11. On 16 April 2018, Mr Peter Worley was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for sexual offences. He was sent to HMP Littlehey on 26 June 2019.
12. Mr Worley had several health conditions including hypertension (high blood pressure), atrial fibrillation (a heart condition that causes an irregular heart rate) for which he had a pacemaker (an implanted device which can track and adjust an irregular heart rate), chronic kidney disease (a long-term condition where the kidneys do not work properly), osteoarthritis (a condition which causes the joints to become painful and stiff) and type 2 diabetes (a condition that causes too much sugar in the blood which can lead to serious damage in several areas of the body). Prior to entering prison, Mr Worley also had a mild form of dementia.
13. Mr Worley had a history of falls throughout his time in prison. Following falls in June 2020, he was taken to hospital on 21 June and he had a hip replacement operation a few days later.
14. Following this, Mr Worley's health deteriorated. He continued to have falls and his mobility progressively declined and his confusion increased. Because Littlehey does not have 24-hour health care, ambulances were called on many occasions when he had falls out of hours, some of which resulted in trips to hospital. He was taken to hospital again on 12 August and stayed there until 1 September. From his return to the prison until his death, he spent most of his time in bed.
15. With Mr Worley's increasing needs, Littlehey explored the possibility of moving Mr Worley to HMP Norwich where there is 24-hour health care. This was first considered at the beginning of July after Mr Worley's hip replacement and then again in August when he went to hospital again. Staff made a referral to the Older Person's Unit at Norwich but nothing came of it and staff did not escalate the matter.
16. The prison also considered early release on compassionate grounds (ERCG) for Mr Worley. Staff began the paperwork at the beginning of August, but assessments were delayed by Mr Worley's stay in hospital until 1 September. On 3 September, a doctor's assessment for the ERCG consideration noted that Mr Worley was restricted to his bed and incontinent, and that he was without care for up to 12 hours overnight. Under these conditions he gave a prognosis of three to six months survival. On 9 September, a palliative care consultant added to the ERCG paperwork that Mr Worley was "Very Severely Frail" and completely dependent on others for all activities of daily living. On 14 October, the Acting Governor completed the ERCG paperwork with the comments that he did not think prison was a suitable setting for Mr Worley, who he did not think was well enough to reoffend.
17. On 12 November, a doctor considered the ERCG submission on behalf of the Public Protection Casework Section of HMPPS. He determined that Mr Worley was still a potential risk and the appropriate setting for him would be a prison with 24-hour nursing. A letter was sent to Mr Worley on 20 November refusing him early release on compassionate grounds.

18. Mr Worley died in his cell at Littlehey on 21 November at 2.38am.
19. The post-mortem examination recorded that Mr Worley had died from bronchopneumonia.

**Louise Richards**  
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