

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Walter Field a prisoner at HMP Littlehey on 4 December 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 Walter Field died in hospital on 4 December 2020 of respiratory failure and leukaemia, while a prisoner at HMP Littlehey. He was 84 years old. We offer our condolences to Mr Field's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Field received at Littlehey was equivalent to that he could have expected to receive in the community. However, she made six recommendations. None of them were related to Mr Field's death and have not been included in this report.
5. We found no non-clinical issues of concern. We make no recommendations.

The Investigation Process

6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Field's clinical care at Littlehey.
7. The PPO investigator has investigated non-clinical issues, including Mr Field's location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts, liaison with his family and whether compassionate release was considered.
8. The PPO family liaison officer wrote to Mr Field's next of kin, his wife, to explain the investigation. She did not respond to our letter.
9. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

Previous deaths at HMP Littlehey

10. Mr Field was the 18th prisoner to die at Littlehey since December 2018. Of the previous deaths, 16 were from natural causes and one was self-inflicted.

Key Events

11. On 26 January 2017, Mr Walter Field was sentenced to five years and six months in prison for sexual offences (later increased on appeal to six years and eight months). On 24 February, he was moved to HMP Littlehey.
12. Mr Field had several significant medical conditions including anaemia, high blood pressure and lung disease. In July 2019, he was diagnosed with chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia (blood cancer).
13. Mr Field remained relatively stable until November 2020, when he began to deteriorate. He developed a swollen right leg and became more fatigued. On 25 November, he was admitted to hospital where tests identified a rapid progression of his leukaemia. He was dependent on blood and platelet transfusions and oxygen treatment. No other treatment options were available.
14. On 27 November, the prison began an application for Mr Field's early release on compassionate grounds after he was told that he had only two weeks to live. However, on 1 December, Mr Field told a prison doctor that it was his wish to stay in hospital where he was receiving end of life palliative care. The doctor also noted that Mr Field was too frail to move.
15. Mr Field died in hospital on 4 December 2020. The post-mortem examination found that Mr Field died of acute respiratory distress syndrome (respiratory failure) and chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia. He also had ischaemic and hypertensive heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD - lung disease) and pulmonary thromboembolus (blood clot in the lung) due to deep venous thrombosis, which did not cause but contributed to his death.

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