

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Philip Coudjoe, a prisoner at HMP Forest Bank, on 10 August 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 Philip Coudjoe, who was 57 years old, died of gastrointestinal bleeding due to liver cancer caused by hepatitis C on 10 August 2020 at Salford Royal Hospital. We offer our condolences to Mr Coudjoe's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Coudjoe received at HMP Forest Bank was good and equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community and made no recommendations.
5. We did not find any non-clinical issues of concern.

Investigation Process

6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Coudjoe's clinical care at Forest Bank. The clinical reviewer interviewed healthcare staff with the PPO investigator present. The interviews were conducted by video link because of the restrictions in place due to the coronavirus pandemic.
7. The PPO has investigated the non-clinical issues in Mr Coudjoe's care, including his location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts and liaison with his family.
8. Mr Coudjoe's family were informed the initial report was available but did not wish to receive a copy or make any comment.
9. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

Previous deaths at Forest Bank

10. Mr Coudjoe was the seventh prisoner to die at Forest Bank since August 2018. Of the previous deaths, two were also natural causes, two were self inflicted and two are unclassified. There were no similarities with Mr Coudjoe's death.

Key Events

11. On 27 April 2020, Mr Philip Coudjoe was taken from court to HMP Forest Bank, awaiting sentencing for burglary. Mr Coudjoe had a significant history of substance misuse and had a heart defect. At his initial health screen that day, he said he had no physical health concerns and declined blood-borne virus screening. He was prescribed medication for anxiety and depression and started on a methadone stabilisation programme.
12. He did not have a secondary health screen. This was apparently due to restrictions in place during the coronavirus pandemic.
13. On 3 August, a healthcare assistant saw Mr Coudjoe in the exercise yard and noticed that his eyes were yellow. She spoke to a prison GP who arranged for Mr Coudjoe to have urgent blood tests. The results of the blood tests led to an urgent cancer referral on 4 August.
14. The same day, Mr Coudjoe told healthcare staff that he suspected he had hepatitis C although he had never had blood-borne virus screening and had never been diagnosed.
15. At 9.43am on 5 August, a nurse called Mr Coudjoe on his in-cell telephone to check how he was. He told the nurse he felt unwell and she arranged for a further check up in the healthcare centre. That afternoon, just before 2.00pm, officers contacted the nurse and told her that Mr Coudjoe had stomach pain and had been passing blood. When she spoke to Mr Coudjoe on the phone, he told her that he had no pain and had not passed blood but had been vomiting and could not keep fluids down. She spoke to the prison GP, who asked for Mr Coudjoe to be taken to the healthcare centre for review.
16. At about 2.30pm, on his way to the healthcare centre, Mr Coudjoe collapsed and was bleeding from his rectum. Officers radioed a medical emergency code and an ambulance was called. Healthcare staff took Mr Coudjoe's observations, which showed he had low blood pressure and an elevated heart rate. Healthcare staff tried to stabilise Mr Coudjoe until the ambulance arrived and took him to the intensive care unit at Salford Royal Hospital. Mr Coudjoe was not subject to restraints on his escort to hospital or while he was in hospital.
17. The same day, Forest Bank assigned a family liaison officer (FLO) and contacted Mr Coudjoe's next of kin to tell them that Mr Coudjoe's condition was critical. The prison stayed in contact with Mr Coudjoe's family, who visited him in hospital. Mr Coudjoe's health continued to deteriorate and he died in hospital on 10 August.
18. The post-mortem examination found that Mr Coudjoe died of gastrointestinal bleeding due to liver cancer caused by hepatitis C.

Karen Johnson
Assistant Ombudsman

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