

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

# Independent investigation into the death of Mr Thomas Ford on 1 December 2021, following his release from HMP Altcourse

**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. From 6 September 2021, the PPO is investigating post-release deaths that occur within 14 days of the prisoner's release.
3. We carry out investigations to understand what happened and identify how the organisations whose actions we oversee can improve their work in the future.
4. Mr Thomas Ford died from pneumonia on 1 December 2021, following his release from HMP Altcourse on 17 November. He was 62 years old. We offer our condolences to those who knew him.
5. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care that Mr Ford received at Altcourse was equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community.
6. We did not find any issues of concern. We make no recommendations.

### Investigation Process

7. The PPO investigator obtained copies of relevant extracts from Mr Ford's prison and probation records.
8. We informed HM Coroner for Cheshire of the investigation. The Coroner gave us the results of the post-mortem examination. We have sent the Coroner a copy of this report.
9. Mr Ford did not have a nominated next of kin.
10. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS pointed out one factual inaccuracy and this has been amended accordingly.

# Background Information

## HMP Altcourse

11. HMP Altcourse is a local prison in Liverpool, which takes prisoners from courts in Merseyside, Cheshire and North Wales. It holds up to 1,164 remanded and sentenced adults and young men. G4S manages the prison and provides primary healthcare services.

## Probation Service

12. Probation services supervise individuals serving community orders, provide offenders with resettlement services while they are in prison (in anticipation of their release) and supervise all individuals sentenced for offences committed after the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014, for a minimum of 12 months after they are released from prison.

## Key Events

13. On 17 November 2021, Mr Thomas Ford was released on licence from HMP Altcourse. He was required to live in the same accommodation he had been in before going to prison, which was a flat supported by Muir, a housing association.
14. Mr Ford was released from prison on the morning of 17 November and went straight to a meeting with his offender manager. The offender manager explained Mr Ford's licence conditions to him, and Mr Ford signed them to confirm that he understood. There were no concerns raised and Mr Ford left to go to his flat.
15. On 30 November, Mr Ford was scheduled to have another meeting with his offender manager. However, that day a member of Muir housing support staff contacted Probation and told them that Mr Ford was unwell, so would not be able to attend his appointment. Probation staff spoke to Mr Ford and agreed to reschedule to 14 December.
16. On 1 December, at 1.57am, Mr Ford made a 999 call asking for help. He said that he thought he had COVID-19 and may also have had a stroke. A short while later he called 999 again. Emergency call centre staff noticed that Mr Ford's speech was slurred and, midway through the call, he went quiet.
17. An ambulance was sent to Mr Ford's flat immediately. Paramedics knocked at the door but could not get any response. They forced the door open and found that Mr Ford had died.

### Post-mortem report

18. The post-mortem report concluded that Mr Ford died from bronchopneumonia (a lung infection) caused by emphysema (a long-term lung condition).

## Findings

19. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Ford received at Altcourse was equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community.
20. The clinical reviewer noted that while Mr Ford was in prison, he was offered support and monitoring for his long-term conditions. However, he chose not to engage and did not attend any of the meetings to discuss his health needs. He also refused to have his COVID-19 vaccination.
21. When Mr Ford was released from prison, he was given all the medication that he needed, his discharge summary was sent to his GP and an appointment was made for him to attend the GP surgery for a review.
22. We are satisfied that there was nothing that prison or probation staff could have done to prevent Mr Ford's death.

**Sue McAllister CB**  
**Prisons and Probation Ombudsman**

**April 2022**

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