

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Iftikhar Shah, a prisoner at HMP Littlehey, on 30 April 2022

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 Iftikhar Shah died of cancer on 30 April 2022 at HMP Littlehey. He was 48 years old. We offer our condolences to Mr Shah's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Shah received at Littlehey was equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. The clinical reviewer made no recommendations.
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 Shah's clinical care at Littlehey. The clinical reviewer's report is attached as Annex 1.
7. The PPO investigator investigated the non-clinical issues relating to Mr Shah's care, including his prison 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 Shah's next of kin, his father, to explain the investigation and to ask if he had any matters he wanted us to consider. He did not respond to our letter.
9. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS pointed out some factual inaccuracies and this report has been amended accordingly.

Previous deaths at HMP Littlehey

10. Mr Shah was the 32nd prisoner to die at Littlehey since April 2020. Of the previous deaths, 30 were from natural causes and one was self-inflicted.

Key Events

11. On 19 February 2020, Mr Iftikhar Shah was convicted of sexual offences and sentenced to 11 years in prison.
12. On 1 April 2021, Mr Shah was moved to HMP Littlehey.
13. On 6 February 2022, a prison nurse saw Mr Shah after he reported feeling dizzy and struggling to stand. The following day, Mr Shah attended an appointment with the prison GP who requested blood tests.
14. On 7 February, a prison GP reviewed some of Mr Shah's blood test results and found them to be abnormal. He decided to wait until further results had been returned to decide what action to take.
15. The following day, as healthcare staff had still had not received the results of other blood tests, a prison GP decided to send Mr Shah to hospital for further investigation. After arriving in A&E, the hospital said there was a six hour wait. Mr Shah refused to stay and was returned to Littlehey. He signed a disclaimer to say he was aware of the risks to his health.
16. On 9 February, a prison GP received the results of the outstanding blood tests. These were also abnormal and he sent Mr Shah to A&E. Mr Shah received two blood transfusions and returned to Littlehey later that evening.
17. On 15 February, Mr Shah collapsed in the waiting room of the prison's healthcare centre. Nurses requested an ambulance and he was taken to hospital. However he self-discharged as he was unhappy with the wait times, being restrained and the food at the hospital. He signed a disclaimer to say he understood he was going against medical advice.
18. Mr Shah's condition continued to deteriorate and further blood tests returned abnormal results. Mr Shah was reluctant to go to hospital for further investigations as he did not like being restrained. On 4 March, he agreed to attend hospital and stay for the duration of any investigations required.
19. On 8 March, a hospital doctor told Mr Shah he had stomach cancer. Mr Shah discharged himself from hospital the following day.
20. On 10 March, a prison nurse went to see Mr Shah to provide more information on his diagnosis. During this conversation, Mr Shah said he did not want anyone to resuscitate him if his heart or breathing stopped and signed an order to that effect.
21. On 22 March, a prison GP spoke with a hospital consultant about Mr Shah's treatment. He told her that Mr Shah likely had six months left to live, but possibly less than three months.
22. On 1 April, staff submitted an application for Mr Shah's early release on compassionate grounds to the Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). The application was not considered before Mr Shah's death.

23. Mr Shah's condition continued to deteriorate and he died at Littlehey on 30 April at 9.20pm.

Cause of death

24. The Coroner accepted the cause of death provided by a prison doctor and no post-mortem examination was carried out. The prison doctor recorded that Mr Shah died of metastatic gastric cancer (stomach cancer which had spread to other parts of the body.)

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