

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Geoffrey Johnson, a prisoner at HMP Wandsworth, on 12 January 2023

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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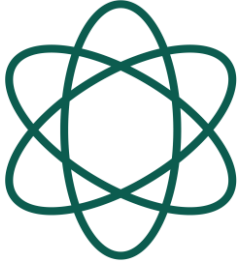
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Our vision

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

OGI

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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. If my office is to best assist HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) in ensuring the standard of care received by those within service remit is appropriate, our recommendations should be focused, evidenced and viable. This is especially the case if there is evidence of systemic failure.
3. Mr Geoffrey Johnson died in a hospice of prostate cancer on 12 January 2023, while a prisoner at HMP Wandsworth. He was 79 years old. We offer our condolences to Mr Johnson's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Johnson received at Wandsworth was of a good standard and equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. The clinical reviewer made one recommendation on updating prisoners on the progress of applications for early release on compassionate grounds.
5. We found no non-clinical issues of concern. We make no recommendations.

The Investigation Process

6. HMPPS notified us of Mr Johnson's death on 12 January 2023.
7. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Johnson's clinical care at Wandsworth.
8. The PPO investigator investigated the non-clinical issues relating to Mr Johnson's care.
9. The PPO's family liaison officer wrote to Mr Johnson's next of kin, his daughter, to explain the investigation and to ask if she had any matters she wanted us to consider. She had no questions but asked for a copy of our report.
10. Mr Johnson's daughter received a copy of the initial report. She did not make any comments.
11. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

Previous deaths at HMP Wandsworth

12. Mr Johnson was the nineteenth prisoner to die at Wandsworth since January 2020. Of the previous deaths, four were from natural causes, twelve were self-inflicted, one was drugs related, and one was of unknown cause. There are no similarities between our findings in the investigation into Mr Johnson's death and our investigation findings for the previous deaths.

Key Events

13. In 2013, before he was sentenced, Mr Johnson was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He had been told his cancer was in remission.
14. On 9 September 2014, Mr Johnson was convicted of money laundering and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. In March 2016, he was sentenced to an additional 14 years' imprisonment as he had not paid his confiscation order.
15. Prior to his trial, Mr Johnson left the UK. He was arrested in Dubai in July 2017 and deported to the UK. On 13 July 2017, Mr Johnson arrived at HMP Wandsworth.
16. On 25 July, the healthcare team at Wandsworth made an urgent referral to the hospital urology department (who treat prostate problems), following an abnormal blood test result. Mr Johnson remained under the care of the urology department and attended several appointments to monitor his prostate.
17. On 29 August, Mr Johnson had a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan due to swelling in his leg. The results showed that Mr Johnson's cancer had returned and that it had spread to his bones and lymph nodes (glands that are part of the immune system). Mr Johnson started hormone treatment (to slow or stop the growth of cancer).
18. On 17 September 2018, an oncologist (cancer doctor) told Mr Johnson that his cancer had advanced. Mr Johnson started chemotherapy treatment on 27 November.
19. On 16 November 2021, Mr Johnson said he did not want anyone to resuscitate him if his heart or breathing stopped and signed an order to that effect.
20. On 20 January 2022, Mr Johnson was admitted to hospital following an oncology outpatient appointment. Whilst admitted, the oncology team told Mr Johnson that his cancer was terminal, and his chemotherapy was to be stopped. Mr Johnson was told he had less than three months to live.
21. On 17 February, Wandsworth submitted an application for Mr Johnson's early release on compassionate grounds to the Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) of HMPPS. On 9 May, the application was declined by the Secretary of State due to Mr Johnson's risk of re-offending.
22. On 13 May, Mr Johnson told prison staff he wanted to transfer to a prison closer to his family. Prison and healthcare staff requested a move for Mr Johnson to a prison near Stafford or Stoke, however due to his 24-hour care needs, none of the prisons they approached was able to accept him.
23. On 3 January 2023, due to a further deterioration in Mr Johnson's health, the prison re-applied for compassionate release.
24. On 5 January, Mr Johnson was moved to Trinity Hospice. At approximately 10am on 12 January, Mr Johnson died.

Post-mortem report

25. The coroner accepted the cause of death provided by a doctor and no post-mortem examination was carried out. The doctor gave Mr Johnson's cause of death as metastatic prostate cancer. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), chronic kidney disease and atrial fibrillation were listed as contributory factors.
26. At the inquest held on 27 March 2023, the coroner concluded that Mr Johnson died from natural causes. She recorded the medical cause of death as metastatic prostate cancer.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

July 2023

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