

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

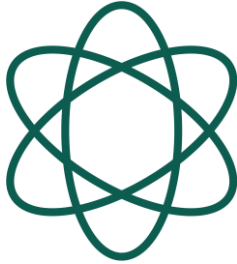
# **Independent investigation into the death of Mr Alexandru Calaroi on 9 December 2021, following his release from HMP Highpoint**

**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

**OGL**

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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. Since 6 September 2021, the PPO has been investigating post-release deaths that occur within 14 days of the person's release from prison.
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 Alexandru Calaroi died from the toxic effects of a combination of drugs on 9 December 2021, following his release from HMP Highpoint on 3 December. He was 34 years old. We offer our condolences to those who knew him.
5. Mr Calaroi had a history of substance misuse. He was offered support from the substance misuse services at both Highpoint and HMP Chelmsford, his previous prison, but he declined their help.
6. Mr Calaroi's probation practitioner was aware of Mr Calaroi's issues with substance misuse and put a licence condition in place to address this. He planned to speak to Mr Calaroi about his substance misuse issues in his second appointment, when he would have organised an appointment with the local substance misuse team. However, Mr Calaroi had died by the time of his second appointment.
7. We make no recommendations.

## The Investigation Process

8. The PPO investigator obtained copies of relevant extracts from Mr Calaroi's prison and probation records.
9. We informed HM Coroner for Essex of the investigation. He gave us the results of the post-mortem examination. We have sent the coroner a copy of this report.
10. The Ombudsman's family liaison officer contacted Mr Calaroi's next of kin, his father, to explain the investigation and to ask if he had any matters he wanted us to consider. He had no questions but asked for a copy of our report.
11. Mr Calaroi's father received a copy of the draft report. He did not make any comments.
12. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

## Background Information

### HMP Highpoint

13. HMP Highpoint is a category C training and resettlement prison which holds up to 1,300 men. It is managed by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service. Care UK provides substance misuse services.

### HM Inspectorate of Prisons

14. The most recent inspection of HMP Highpoint was in August 2019. Inspectors reported that substance misuse services were accessible to prisoners and that the team had manageable caseloads. They delivered harm reduction, relapse prevention and recovery focused activities through both one-to-one and group sessions. Clinical and psychosocial teams coordinated work effectively to support prisoners on release. This included pre-release re-toxification where appropriate. Harm reduction advice was supplied, but support to enable prisoners to access naloxone (medication used to prevent an opiate overdose) was not provided.

### Probation Service

15. The Probation Service work with all individuals subject to custodial and community sentences. During a person's imprisonment, they oversee their sentence plan to assist in rehabilitation, as well as prepare reports to advise the Parole Board and have links with local partnerships to whom, where appropriate, they refer people for resettlement services. Post-release, the Probation Service supervises people throughout their licence period and post-sentence supervision.

## Key Events

16. On 5 October 2021, Mr Alexandru Calaroi was convicted of having a bladed article in a public place and was sentenced to four months in prison. He was sent to HMP Chelmsford.
17. The next day, a nurse saw Mr Calaroi for his first healthcare screening. Mr Calaroi told the nurse that he had last taken heroin four days ago, and that he was experiencing withdrawal symptoms. Mr Calaroi said that he was taking 70ml of methadone (a medicine used to treat heroin dependency) in the community but had stopped taking it one week before coming to prison. The nurse asked Mr Calaroi if he would like to start his methadone prescription again. Mr Calaroi said that he had already been through the hardest part of the withdrawal and said that he would feel like a failure if he started on methadone again. Mr Calaroi told the nurse that he did not want any further support from the prison's substance misuse team.
18. On 13 October, Mr Calaroi was moved to HMP Highpoint.
19. The next day, a nurse saw Mr Calaroi for his initial health screen. Mr Calaroi told the nurse about his history of substance misuse, and that he had been off methadone for three weeks. He told the nurse that he felt fine and no longer had heroin withdrawal symptoms. The nurse told him that if he wanted help from the prison substance misuse services in the future, then he should contact the healthcare department or Phoenix Futures (the prison's substance misuse service).
20. The next day, Phoenix Futures saw Mr Calaroi. Mr Calaroi said that he did not want help with his substance misuse issues and he signed a document to confirm this. Phoenix Futures told him how to refer himself back to their service if he changed his mind.
21. On 3 December, Mr Calaroi was released from Highpoint. That day, he attended his first appointment at Colchester Probation Office. His probation practitioner read through his licence conditions, and Mr Calaroi signed to say he understood them. One of his licence conditions was to address his substance misuse issues by working with the local substance misuse service. Mr Calaroi's probation practitioner said that he would have completed a full assessment at his second appointment with Mr Calaroi and referred him to the local substance misuse service. Mr Calaroi never attended his second appointment (scheduled for 14 December), as he had died by then.

## Circumstances of Mr Calaroi's death

22. On 9 December, a friend of Mr Calaroi found him unresponsive in his home, surrounded by drug paraphernalia and non-prescription medications. They called for an ambulance and when paramedics arrived, they resuscitated Mr Calaroi and took him to hospital. He was admitted to the intensive care unit but died at 11.30pm that evening.

## Post-mortem report

23. The post-mortem report concluded that Mr Calaroi died as a result of the toxic effects of a combination of drugs, including morphine (heroin) and prescription medication. The coroner determined at inquest that Mr Calaroi's death was drug related.
24. At the inquest held on 29 November 2022, the coroner concluded that the death was drug related.

## Findings

25. We are satisfied that Mr Calaroi was offered appropriate support from the substance misuse services at both HMP Chelmsford and HMP Highpoint, which he declined. At the time of his release, Highpoint was not providing prisoners with naloxone kits (medication that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose), even if they were under the care of the substance misuse service. We understand that the prison will shortly start providing naloxone kits to prisoners who are at risk of overdose when released, including those who are not currently under the care of substance misuse services.
26. We are satisfied that Mr Calaroi's probation practitioner put appropriate measures in place to address Mr Calaroi's substance misuse issues when he was released from prison. We accept that the probation practitioner was going to refer Mr Calaroi to the local substance misuse service, but he died before this could happen.
27. We make no recommendations.

**Adrian Usher**  
**Prisons and Probation Ombudsman**

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