

PRISONS AND PROBATION OMBUDSMAN SEE SELF-NEGLECT AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING ISSUES IN PRISON DEATHS

The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) has published their Annual Report for 2022-23, a year which saw an increase in prison and self-inflicted deaths.

The PPO investigates deaths of prisoners, young people in detention, offenders under probation supervision and individuals detained under immigration powers.

Acting Ombudsman from June 2022 to April 2023, Kimberley Bingham expressed her frustrations in the report which highlights there were 404 deaths in 2022-23, 322 of which were prisoner deaths, 34 more than last year.

Adult safeguarding continues to be an area of concern for the PPO as they began investigations into 92 self-inflicted deaths, 5 more than the previous year.

“Prisons have a duty to keep prisoners safe and protect them from abuse and neglect,” said Kimberley.

“97 of our recommendations in 2022-23 related to suicide and self-harm prevention. Self-neglect is an extreme lack of self-care and is a category of neglect which falls under adult safeguarding procedures.”

“I am not only concerned by the increase in prison deaths we have seen, but also by the increased number of self-inflicted deaths. A key question in our investigations is whether there are underlying systemic issues that need to be brought to light.”

The Ombudsman’s report highlights the case of Mr K, revealing a prisoner who was found hanged in his cell six weeks after arriving at his prison. He was a challenging prisoner who refused to engage with staff and spent long periods of time in his cell, neglecting his self-care and not always collecting medication. The PPO identified a lack of effective care planning to help address Mr K’s risk, and HMPPS had no self-neglect guidance in place to help staff support prisoners like Mr K.

“We recognise it can be challenging for prison and healthcare staff to work with someone who self-neglects, but more must be done by HMPPS to develop a self-neglect strategy and guidance to be used in the prison environment.”

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

1. The report is available at <https://www.ppo.gov.uk/document/annual-reports/>
2. Adrian Usher was appointed as Prisons and Probation Ombudsman in April 2023. Kimberley Bingham became Acting Ombudsman in July 2022 until April 2023.
3. The PPO is appointed by and reports directly to the Secretary of State for Justice. The Ombudsman's office is wholly independent of the services in remit, which include those provided by HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), Prisoner Escort and Custody Service, the Home Office (Immigration Enforcement), the Youth Custody Service, and those local authorities with secure children's homes. It is also operationally independent of, but sponsored by, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
4. The roles and responsibilities of the PPO are set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the latest version of which can be found in the appendices.
5. The PPO has three main investigative duties:
 - complaints made by prisoners, young people in detention, offenders under probation supervision and individuals detained under immigration powers (detained individuals)
 - deaths of prisoners, young people in detention, approved premises' residents and detained individuals due to any cause
 - deaths of recently released prisoners that occur within 14 days of release from prison (except homicide)
6. Please contact Ema Murphy the Communications and Media Manager at ppocomms@ppo.gov.uk if you would like more information.