

PRISONS AND PROBATION OMBUDSMAN TO CARRY OUT SPECIAL INVESTIGATION INTO ABUSE AT DETENTION CENTRE

24 October 2023 - Announced today, the Secretary of State for Justice has commissioned the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) to carry out a special investigation into the abuse that took place at Medomsley Detention Centre between 1961 and 1987.

Medomsley Detention Centre was a facility that held boys and young men aged 17 – 21, some of whom have since reported being subjected to abuse while detained at the centre. Police investigations since the 1990's have led to the convictions of eight former members of staff.

Ombudsman Adrian Usher said: “The Secretary of State for Justice asked my office to carry out an independent investigation into what the Authorities¹ knew about the abuse that took place at Medomsley.

We will consider whether there were opportunities for the Authorities to have taken action or intervened at that time, and what actions (if any) they took in such instances.”

The PPO has confirmed it will not re-investigate the facts of the abuse or individual incidents at Medomsley Detention Centre. The PPO is in the process of putting together a dedicated investigation team.

“This is an important investigation to understand how this large-scale abuse was able take place. We need to find out what the authorities knew and whether there were opportunities for them to have taken action at the time”.

The Ombudsman’s office will publish a formal written report of their findings.

- ENDS –

Notes to editors:

1. Adrian Usher was appointed as Prisons and Probation Ombudsman in April 2023.
2. 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).
3. The roles and responsibilities of the PPO are set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the latest version of which can be found at <https://www.ppo.gov.uk/about/vision-and-values/terms-of-reference/>
4. The PPO has three main investigative duties:

¹ Authorities: refers to relevant public bodies and their employees, including the police, probation, the prison service, health and social care services, inspectorates, charities, local government and central government.

- 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)

5. To view the Terms of Reference for this special investigation, visit <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/ppo-prod-storage-1q9rkhjhkimgw/uploads/2023/10/Annex-B.-Medomsley-Detention-Centre.-PPO-special-investigation.-Terms-of-Reference.pdf>
6. For queries relating to this special investigation, please contact ppomedomsleyinvestigation@ppo.gov.uk.