

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

# **Independent investigation into the death of Mr John Hutchinson, a prisoner at HMP Preston, on 22 December 2022**

Third Floor, 10 South Colonnade  
Canary Wharf, London E14 4PU

Email: [mail@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:mail@ppo.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.ppo.gov.uk](http://www.ppo.gov.uk)

T | 020 7633 4100

## OUR VISION

To deliver high quality and timely independent investigations and work closely with partners to achieve tangible benefits for the safety and confidence of those in custody and under community supervision.

## WHAT WE DO



## WHAT WE VALUE



© Crown copyright, 2023

This report is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3)

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

## 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 His Majesty's 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 John Hutchinson died of cancer on 22 December 2022 at HMP Preston. He was 73 years old. We offer our condolences to Mr Hutchinson's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Hutchinson received at Preston was of a good standard and equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community.
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 Hutchinson's clinical care.
7. The PPO investigator investigated the non-clinical issues relating to Mr Hutchinson's care.
8. The PPO family liaison officer wrote to Mr Hutchinson's next of kin, his daughter, to explain the investigation and to ask if she had any matters she wanted us to consider. She did not respond to our letter.
9. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

## **Previous deaths at HMP Preston**

10. Mr Hutchinson was the sixth prisoner to die at Preston since December 2019. Of the previous deaths, three were from natural causes and two were self-inflicted.

## Key Events

11. In February 2007, Mr John Hutchinson was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder. On 12 December 2019, he was moved to HMP Lancaster Farms.
12. On 14 May 2022, Mr Hutchinson approached a nurse and told her that he had found a lump to the left side of his neck that was painful. The nurse told Mr Hutchinson that he would need to apply for an appointment to have it looked at.
13. On 20 May, a GP examined Mr Hutchinson who also said he was feeling tired. The GP referred Mr Hutchinson to hospital using the two-week suspected cancer route.
14. On 1 June, Mr Hutchinson attended an appointment with a hospital consultant. The consultant arranged further tests to check the lump, including a fine needle aspiration (a procedure to investigate lumps or masses), a computerised tomography (CT) scan (uses X-rays and a computer to create detailed images of the inside of the body), and a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan (uses strong magnetic fields and radio waves to produce detailed images of the inside of the body).
15. On 4 July, Mr Hutchinson was diagnosed with squamous cell carcinoma (a type of skin cancer).
16. On 15 August, Mr Hutchinson attended an appointment at the hospital. The clinical team told him that surgery was not an option to treat his cancer and that he would need to have radiotherapy.
17. On 8 September, Mr Hutchinson had a feeding tube inserted into his stomach (to support with feeding, drinking, and medication).
18. On 29 September, Mr Hutchinson was moved from Lancaster Farms to the healthcare unit at HMP Preston, where he could receive 24-hour care.
19. On 3 October, Mr Hutchinson started radiotherapy treatment.
20. On 11 October, while in hospital, Mr Hutchinson told the prison healthcare team that he no longer wanted to have radiotherapy as it was making him feel worse and he decided to stop his active treatment.
21. On 13 October, Mr Hutchinson said he did not want anyone to resuscitate him if his heart or breathing stopped and signed an order to that effect.
22. On 22 November, the prison submitted an application for Mr Hutchinson's early release on compassionate grounds to the Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) of HMPPS, which the Governor supported. However, PPCS refused the application on 14 December as they were not satisfied that Mr Hutchinson no longer posed a risk to the public.
23. On 19 December, Mr Hutchinson started to deteriorate, and his end-of-life care plan was started. On 22 December at 2.20pm, Mr Hutchinson died.

## **Cause of death**

24. The coroner accepted the cause of death provided by a hospital doctor and no post-mortem examination was carried out. The doctor gave Mr Hutchinson's cause of death as hypopharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma.

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

**August 2023**

## **Inquest**

25. At the inquest held on 22 September 2023, the coroner concluded that Mr Hutchinson died from natural causes.

**Prisons &  
Probation**

**Ombudsman**  
Independent Investigations

Third Floor, 10 South Colonnade  
Canary Wharf, London E14 4PU

Email: [mail@ppo.gov.uk](mailto:mail@ppo.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.ppo.gov.uk](http://www.ppo.gov.uk)

T | 020 7633 4100