

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

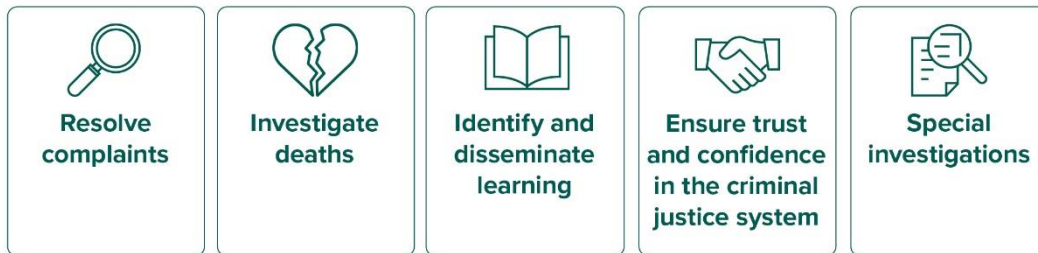
Independent investigation into the death of Mr Anthony Valentine, a prisoner at HMP Wakefield, on 16 May 2023

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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



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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 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 Anthony Valentine died of oesophageal cancer on 16 May 2023, at HMP Wakefield. He was 66 years old. We offer our condolences to Mr Valentine's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Valentine received at Wakefield was of a good standard and was at least equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. The clinical reviewer made no recommendations.
5. We found no non-clinical issues of concern. We make no recommendations.

The Investigation Process

6. HMPPS notified us of Mr Valentine's death on 16 May 2022.
7. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Mr Valentine's clinical care at Wakefield.
8. The PPO investigator investigated the non-clinical issues relating to Mr Valentine's care.
9. The PPO family liaison officer wrote to Mr Valentine's sister 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 Valentine's sister 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 Wakefield

12. Mr Valentine was the twenty-seventh prisoner to die at Wakefield since May 2020. Of the previous deaths, 23 were from natural causes and three were self-inflicted.

Key Events

13. On 15 May 2003, Mr Anthony Valentine was sentenced to life imprisonment for sexual offences. He was sent to HMP Wakefield.
14. On 21 March 2022, Mr Valentine told a GP at Wakefield that he was having trouble swallowing his food and that his medication for heartburn was no longer effective. The GP told Mr Valentine that his symptoms indicated that he might have throat cancer, and that he needed to be referred to hospital for further tests. Mr Valentine said that he did not want to be referred to the hospital. The GP told him to contact the healthcare team if he changed his mind.
15. On 1 April, a nurse at Wakefield saw Mr Valentine to discuss his symptoms. She told him that he needed to go to hospital to have a CT scan to confirm if he had throat cancer. Mr Valentine again said that he did not want to go as attending hospital made him feel anxious. A GP agreed to prescribe him diazepam (medication to treat anxiety), and Mr Valentine agreed to attend any upcoming appointments.
16. On 4 April, a GP at Wakefield completed a suspected cancer referral form and sent it to the local hospital.
17. On 31 May, Mr Valentine attended Pontefract Hospital for an MRI scan. He also had a barium swallow X-ray (a specific type of X-ray which examines the gullet and stomach).
18. On 14 June, a hospital consultant diagnosed Mr Valentine with a probable malignant mid-oesophageal stricture (narrowing of the oesophagus), which he said was likely to be caused by cancer. The hospital organised for him to be seen by the oncology (cancer) team, and for further tests to be completed.
19. On 22 July, Mr Valentine said that he did not want to attend hospital for a gastroscopy (a test to check the inside of the oesophagus). He signed a 'refusal of treatment' form.
20. On 31 August, an oncology nurse from the hospital went to Wakefield to see Mr Valentine. She told him that he had oesophageal cancer and explained the different types of treatment available to him.
21. On 20 September, Mr Valentine was admitted to Pinderfields Hospital due to concerns that he was vomiting, despite being given anti-sickness medication. The next day, against the advice of the doctors, Mr Valentine discharged himself from hospital and returned to Wakefield.
22. On 6 October, Mr Valentine attended hospital for a positron emission tomography (PET) scan (produces detailed 3D images of the inside of the body). The PET scan showed that the cancer had spread to the lymph nodes. The oncologist said that Mr Valentine was no longer suitable for surgery.
23. On 20 October, a nurse at Wakefield saw Mr Valentine to discuss his treatment options. Mr Valentine chose to have radiotherapy and agreed to have a nasogastric

tube inserted (a thin tube inserted through the nose into the stomach through which liquid food can be given).

24. On 4 November, Mr Valentine had a nasogastric tube inserted in hospital. On his return to Wakefield, he was moved to the healthcare wing so that the healthcare team could closely monitor him and support him with his nasogastric tube. Ten days later, he asked to return to his prison wing as he felt he did not need any further support. Ten days later, Mr Valentine removed his nasogastric tube as he said it was uncomfortable.
25. On 28 November, Mr Valentine attended St James Hospital for an appointment with his oncologist. The oncologist said that Mr Valentine was now too weak to have curative treatment, however, that he could have palliative radiotherapy (radiotherapy to relieve his symptoms).
26. Over the next few weeks, Mr Valentine attended three of his planned radiotherapy appointments. On 16 December, Mr Valentine said that he no longer wanted to have radiotherapy as it was causing him too much pain. A few days later, his oncologist agreed to stop his radiotherapy treatment.
27. On 3 January 2023, Mr Valentine had a stent fitted (a small tube fitted into the oesophagus to make eating more comfortable) at Pinderfields Hospital.
28. On 4 January, Mr Valentine discharged himself from hospital, against the advice of the doctors. The nursing team at Wakefield encouraged him to move to the inpatient unit, however Mr Valentine said he wished to stay on his prison wing.
29. On 8 January, after a decline in his health, Mr Valentine agreed to move to the inpatient unit at Wakefield. The next day, he was moved to the palliative care suite.
30. Over the next few months, Mr Valentine remained in the palliative care suite where his health deteriorated. Healthcare staff closely monitored Mr Valentine, helped him with self-care, and gave him pain medication.
31. Mr Valentine died on 16 May.

Post-mortem report

32. The coroner accepted the cause of death provided by the GP at Wakefield and no post-mortem examination was carried out. The GP gave Mr Valentine's cause of death as oesophageal carcinoma.
33. At the inquest held on 1 June 2023, the coroner concluded that Mr Valentine died from natural causes.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

November 2023

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