

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Richard Beattie, a prisoner at HMP Rye Hill, on 4 July 2022

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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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. We carry out investigations to understand what happened and identify how the organisations whose actions we oversee can improve their work in the future.
3. Mr Richard Beattie died in a hospice of bowel cancer on 4 July 2022, while a prisoner at HMP Rye Hill. He was 72 years old. We offer our condolences to Mr Beattie's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Mr Beattie received at Rye Hill was equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community. She found that Mr Beattie was treated with compassion and dignity.
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 Beattie's clinical care at HMP Rye Hill.
7. The PPO investigator investigated the non-clinical issues relating to Mr Beattie's care, including Mr Beattie's location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts and whether compassionate release was considered.
8. Mr Beattie had no nominated next of kin so there was no family involvement in this investigation.
9. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS did not find any factual inaccuracies.

Previous deaths at HMP Rye Hill

10. Mr Beattie was the ninth prisoner to die at Rye Hill since July 2020. All the previous deaths were from natural causes.

Key Events

11. In November 2015, Mr Richard Beattie was sentenced to life imprisonment, with a minimum term of 20 years, for attempted murder. He was moved to HMP Rye Hill on 5 August 2021.
12. Mr Beattie was diagnosed with bowel cancer in April 2021. He had part of his bowel removed but declined further medical treatment, including chemotherapy.
13. In February 2022, a hospital doctor told Mr Beattie that his cancer had spread to his lungs and was now terminal. Mr Beattie declined any further potential life extending treatment. Staff put a palliative care plan in place.
14. In April, Mr Beattie complained of back pain. A prison GP prescribed pain relief. Mr Beattie stayed in his cell and staff delivered his meals to him. Healthcare staff reviewed his care plan weekly.
15. In May, Mr Beattie complained that his back pain was getting worse and that he was now experiencing breathlessness. A prison GP prescribed further pain relief. The GP also prescribed a nutritional supplement as Mr Beattie was struggling to eat and was losing weight.
16. In June, healthcare staff recorded that Mr Beattie was entering the last phase of his life. A community palliative care team reviewed Mr Beattie several times during the month and made suggestions about his pain relief.
17. On 1 July, staff submitted an application for Mr Beattie's early release on compassionate grounds to the Public Protection Casework Section (PPCS) of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). This was not processed before he died.
18. Mr Beattie was due to be transferred to a hospice for his final days on 1 July. However, this was delayed until 3 July as initially the ambulance service refused to send an ambulance to the prison. This was outside the prison's control.
19. Mr Beattie died at the hospice on 4 July.

Post-mortem report

20. The Coroner accepted the cause of death provided by a doctor at the hospice and no post-mortem examination was carried out. The doctor gave Mr Beattie's cause of death as metastatic colon cancer (bowel cancer that has spread).

Louise Richards
Assistant Ombudsman

November 2022

Inquest

The inquest, held on 16 January 2024, concluded that Mr Beattie died from natural causes.

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