

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Ms Susan Simpson, a prisoner at HMP Downview, on 29 June 2024

A report by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

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

Email: mail@ppo.gov.uk
Web: 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



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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. On 4 February 2022, Ms Susan Simpson was sentenced to seven years in prison for cruelty or neglect of children.
4. Ms Simpson died of oesophageal cancer (cancer of the food pipe) with liver metastasis (cancerous tumours that have spread to the liver from another part of the body) while a prisoner at HMP Downview. She was 55 years old. We offer our condolences to Ms Simpson's family and friends.
5. The Ombudsman Office wrote to Ms Simpson's family to explain the investigation and to ask if they had any matters they wanted us to consider. Ms Simpson's family asked for a copy of our report.
6. NHS England commissioned an independent clinical reviewer to review Ms Simpson's clinical care at Downview.
7. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care Ms Simpson received at Downview was of a good standard and at least equivalent to what she could have expected to receive in the community.
8. Ms Simpson was diagnosed with an aggressive primary cancer which progressed quickly. Her prognosis was poor. The clinical reviewer did not identify any obvious deficiencies in the care she received at Downview and identified areas of good practice. He did not make any recommendations.
9. The PPO investigator investigated the non-clinical issues relating to Ms Simpson's care.
10. We did not find any non-clinical issues of concern. We make no recommendations.
11. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS pointed out one factual inaccuracy, and this report has been amended accordingly.
12. Ms Simpson's family received a copy of the initial report. They did not make any comments.

Adrian Usher
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

December 2024

Inquests

13. At the inquest held on 19 August 2025, the coroner concluded Ms Simpson died of natural causes.



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