

**Prisons &
Probation**

Ombudsman
Independent Investigations

Independent investigation into the death of Mr Harold Salt, a prisoner at HMP Littlehey, on 27 May 2021

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. 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 Harold Salt died from a blood clot caused by lung cancer on 27 May 2021 while a prisoner at HMP Littlehey. He was 76 years old. We offer our condolences to Mr Salt's family and friends.
4. The clinical reviewer concluded that the clinical care that Mr Salt received at Littlehey after his lung cancer diagnosis was of a reasonable standard and equivalent to that which he could have expected to receive in the community.
5. The clinical reviewer has made several recommendations which were not directly related to Mr Salt's death, but that the Head of Healthcare will need to address.
6. We did not identify any non-clinical issues of concern and make no recommendations.

The Investigation Process

7. NHS England commissioned a clinical reviewer to review Mr Salt's clinical care at Littlehey.
8. The PPO investigator has investigated the non-clinical issues in Littlehey, including his location, the security arrangements for his hospital escorts, liaison with his family and whether compassionate release was considered.
9. The PPO family liaison officer wrote to Mr Salt's wife to explain the investigation and to ask if she had any matters that she wanted the investigation to consider. She did not respond with any questions.
10. The initial report was shared with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). HMPPS pointed out some factual inaccuracies and this report has been amended accordingly.

Previous deaths at HMP Littlehey

11. There were 28 deaths at Littlehey in the two years before Mr Salt's death. Twenty-six of the previous deaths were from natural causes (eight of which were related to COVID-19). One of these deaths was self-inflicted and one remains unclassified. Since Mr Salt died, there have been three deaths from natural causes.
12. There are no significant similarities between our findings in this investigation and those of the other deaths.

Key Events

13. On 11 November 2019, Mr Harold Salt was convicted of sexual offences and on 13 November was sentenced to 18 years in prison. He was sent to HMP Bedford and was transferred to HMP Littlehey on 30 December 2019.
14. Mr Salt had long term health conditions including high blood pressure, skin cancer, osteoarthritis and asthma. He was appropriately referred to the long-term conditions' clinic.
15. In March 2021, Mr Salt was diagnosed with lung cancer after investigations at Hinchingsbrooke and Royal Papworth Hospitals. He was informed of the diagnosis by a palliative care consultant employed at HMP Littlehey Healthcare. On 29 March, Mr Salt was given a prognosis of up to six months and the prison appropriately coordinated an application for his release on compassionate grounds. Mr Salt died before the outcome of his compassionate release application was confirmed.
16. During his end of life planning, Mr Salt said that he wanted to die in a hospice. A referral was made and accepted in April, but he was not transferred as his health unexpectedly improved for a short time.
17. On 10 May, the palliative care consultant arranged for Mr Salt to be transferred to Hinchingsbrooke Hospital as his physical health had worsened again. The palliative care consultant advised that Mr Salt's needs could not be met at Littlehey as they did not have 24-hour nursing care. Mr Salt was discharged back to Littlehey on 14 May with daily support from social care staff.
18. On 27 May at 8.45am, Mr Salt collapsed and became unresponsive whilst a nurse was changing his pain relief patch. A prison doctor confirmed that Mr Salt had died at 8.55am.

Post-mortem report

19. The post-mortem concluded that Mr Salt died of bilateral pulmonary thrombo-emboli (a blood clot blocking the blood flow to the lung) caused by bilateral lung carcinomas (a type of lung cancer).

Clinical Findings

20. The independent clinical reviewer concluded that the care that Mr Salt received was equivalent to that he could have expected to receive in the community. Mr Salt's long-term conditions and palliative care was well managed by the prison. However, the reviewer has made recommendations in relation to clinical care not linked to Mr Salt's death.

Inquest

21. The inquest concluded that Mr Salt died of bilateral pulmonary thrombo-emboli (a blood clot blocking the blood flow to the lung) caused by bilateral lung carcinomas (a type of lung cancer).

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March 2022

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