

## PPO 'Investigating Fatal Incidents' DVD Transcript

**SUBTITLE: 1 TIME IN: 00:06**

My son died in prison.

**SUBTITLE: 2 TIME IN: 00:08**

There was so many answers we wanted – what did the prison do, what didn't they do, why did he die?

**SUBTITLE: 3 TIME IN: 00:20**

Basically a prison's like a small community and unfortunately in some cases we do experience death and when that happens it's quite tragic and traumatic for the prisoner's family but it's also the prisoners around there that are actually going through their own troubles and see this happen as well as the staff actually dealing with the deaths.

**SUBTITLE: 4 TIME IN: 00:40**

INVESTIGATING FATAL INCIDENTS

**SUBTITLE: 5 TIME IN: 00:47**

We've got two principal functions in the Ombudsman's Office.

**SUBTITLE: 6 TIME IN: 00:51**

We investigate complaints from prisoners, those subject to probation supervision and those held in immigration detention and we have the mournful responsibility of investigating every death that occurs in prison, immigration detention or amongst the residents of probation approved premises.

**SUBTITLE: 7 TIME IN: 01:08**

We investigate to assist the coroner but also to provide information for the bereaved family and to help the establishment to learn the lessons and to improve the care that they give.

**SUBTITLE: 8 TIME IN: 01:24**

We're completely independent from the Prison Service and we look at practice and systems and make sure that everything is in place to ensure the safety of prisoners as far as possible.

**SUBTITLE: 9 TIME IN: 01:35**

We investigate all deaths in prison custody, approved premises and immigration detention centres.

**SUBTITLE: 10 TIME IN: 01:41**

Anybody who dies within that particular establishment whether it be by natural causes, whether it's a self inflicted death we would actually investigate.

**SUBTITLE: 11 TIME IN: 01:50**

One of the first things that particular investigator will then do is visit the establishment where the death has occurred.

**SUBTITLE: 12 TIME IN: 01:56**

When we're investigating a suicide we're looking essentially to see whether it could have been prevented or not

**SUBTITLE: 13 TIME IN: 02:02**

Did the staff take the proper monitoring action and did they take the proper precautions.

**SUBTITLE: 14 TIME IN: 02:06**

I need to get an understanding of that environment that they've lived in, the sort of contact they've had with particular individuals, staff and prisoners.

**SUBTITLE: 15 TIME IN: 02:15**

Generally I want to see how this person has been cared for.

**SUBTITLE: 16 TIME IN: 02:19**

When they come in it can be demanding because there's large requests, it's arranging staff interviews and stuff like that and it may feel at first that you're in an inquisition and you're to blame but it's about finding out if there's systemic failures, finding out if the processes are in place, are correct and that's really all they're doing.

**SUBTITLE: 17 TIME IN: 02:44**

My job mainly is to investigate deaths due to natural causes.

**SUBTITLE: 18 TIME IN: 02:48**

We're looking to establish that the deceased received the appropriate level of care equal to what they might expect to receive in the community, that nothing has been missed that might have helped prevent the death and also if someone is in hospital with a terminal illness, whether they've been handcuffed and if they were, was this really necessary given their physical condition.

**SUBTITLE: 19 TIME IN: 03:07**

As far as the wider society is concerned, everybody in the Ombudsman's Office believes that prisoners have a right to be treated with dignity and with humanity and that is what motivates us to carry out these investigations.

**SUBTITLE: 20 TIME IN: 03:24**

What we are really looking to do is ensure that the establishment under investigation or the service under investigation have the facilities or the expertise available to provide appropriate care for someone in a similar situation in future.

**SUBTITLE: 21 TIME IN: 03:43**

Each investigation has a Family Liaison Officer who will lead the contact with the family throughout the investigation.

**SUBTITLE: 22 TIME IN: 03:50**

Obviously families are very upset that their next of kin has died in custody and it's useful to have a Family Liaison Officer as the main point of contact.

**SUBTITLE: 23 TIME IN: 04:00**

We offer them the chance of a visit to discuss their issues, questions and concerns about the care that their loved one received whilst in prison.

**SUBTITLE: 24 TIME IN: 04:09**

We deal with the emotions, and the grief and the distress that they are suffering at that time.

**SUBTITLE: 25 TIME IN: 04:15**

You could talk to her in plain English.

**SUBTITLE: 26 TIME IN: 04:19**

It didn't matter how you said it, what you wanted to say, whether you were crying.

**SUBTITLE: 27 TIME IN: 04:25**

However you felt, she just listened.

**SUBTITLE: 28 TIME IN: 04:32**

We take everything they say to us very seriously so whether it becomes a major part of the investigation or not, whatever issues they have are very important to them personally at the time so we have to take as much credence from that as possible.

**SUBTITLE: 29 TIME IN: 04:35**

We put the family at the centre of our investigations so we have a responsibility to provide information for the family and we share documents with them and make sure that they have the opportunity to comment on our reports at every stage.

**SUBTITLE: 30 TIME IN: 05:03**

Obviously, recommendations are made from the reports and these are passed on to the family so that they can see that we are making and taking positive steps to prevent this happening to people in the future if there's been a lack of care or things that could have been done that should have been done.

**SUBTITLE: 31 TIME IN: 05:25**

We have a very open disclosure policy.

**SUBTITLE: 32 TIME IN: 05:28**

We are prepared to share any information that we have with the relevant people who are interested in that particular death so that includes the family, the coroner and the service themselves.

**SUBTITLE: 33 TIME IN: 05:41**

The more open and honest you are with the investigation, the more detailed and thorough and most importantly the recommendations can be more accurate and therefore prevent further death in custodies.

**SUBTITLE: 34 TIME IN: 05:52**

We make national recommendations and we make local recommendations.

**SUBTITLE: 35 TIME IN: 05:56**

A national one that we are really pleased about is that as a result of our investigations every prison officer now carries an anti-ligature knife which means that if they find somebody who is attempting to harm themselves that they can cut the ligature and very often can save somebody's life.

**SUBTITLE: 36 TIME IN: 06:14**

As we grow and progress through each action plan and recommendation given to us we in fact become safer and that's a good thing.

**SUBTITLE: 37 TIME IN: 06:24**

One thing which gives me a great deal of satisfaction in leading this team is the pride which people take in their work.

**SUBTITLE: 38 TIME IN: 06:31**

They are all committed to looking at the circumstances, finding out what happened, sharing the information with the people who need to know it and in making things safer and better for prisoners in future.

**SUBTITLE: 39 TIME IN: 06:44**

It's a very challenging job but it's also very rewarding being able to provide a family with answers, with the story of what happened to their loved one during their time in prison or in an approved premises.

**SUBTITLE: 40 TIME IN: 06:56**

We do give families, I believe, a good insight into what happens behind those closed doors and certainty as to what has happened to their particular loved one or friend.

**SUBTITLE: 41 TIME IN: 07:05**

I hope our investigations make a real difference to the care of prisoners.

**SUBTITLE: 42 TIME IN: 07:11**

I think that's what drives me and I think drives most of the office to improve the safety of prisoners around the country.

**SUBTITLE: 43 TIME IN: 07:19**

You're not always going to get the answer there and then but you know that once you've asked a question there's somebody who will look into that and try to get you that answer.

**SUBTITLE: 44 TIME IN: 07:30**

It meant a lot.