



The
**Prisoner
Ombudsman**
for Northern Ireland

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

**INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT
INTO THE POST RELEASE DEATH OF**

MR PATRICK MCILROY

**AGED 27 YEARS
ON 09 JUNE 2022
FOLLOWING HIS RELEASE FROM
MAGHABERRY PRISON**

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Foreword from the Prisoner Ombudsman

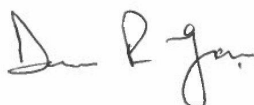
As Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland I have responsibility for investigating, to the extent appropriate, deaths which occur following a prisoner being released from prison custody in Northern Ireland. The investigations are independent of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) and our Terms of Reference are available [here](#).

Mr McIlroy was committed to the care of Maghaberry Prison on 24 February 2022 and released on 6 June 2022. Mr McIlroy died of heroin toxicity three days later on 9 June 2022.

The investigation reports are published to ensure investigation findings, and recommendations for improvement where appropriate, are disseminated in the interest of transparency and to promote best practice in the care of prisoners.

This investigation reviewed the care received by Mr McIlroy from NIPS and the Trust and the processes up to his release. It also includes the concerns raised by Mr McIlroy's family regarding the management of his addiction by the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust prior to his release.

I offer my condolences to the McIlroy family on the death of Patrick.



Darrin Jones
Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
3 June 2025

The role of the Prisoner Ombudsman

The Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland is responsible for providing an independent and impartial investigation into deaths in prison custody in Northern Ireland. This includes the deaths of people shortly after their release from prison and serious adverse incidents.

The Prisoner Ombudsman (Ombudsman) is an independent appointment made by the Minister of Justice. His Investigating Officers are independent of the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS).

The purpose of the Ombudsman's investigation is to find out, as far as possible, what happened and why; establish whether there are any lessons to be learned; assist the Coroner's investigative obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and make recommendations to NIPS and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust) for improvement where appropriate.

By highlighting learning to NIPS, the Trust and others who provide services in prisons, the Ombudsman aims to promote best practice in the care of prisoners.

The Terms of Reference for our investigations are available at www.niprisonerombudsman.com/index.php/publications.

The Ombudsman will decide on the extent of investigation required depending on the circumstances of the death. For the purposes of the investigation, the Ombudsman's remit will include all relevant matters for which NIPS is responsible or would be responsible if not contracted for elsewhere. It will therefore include services commissioned by the NIPS from outside the public sector.

Background information

Mr McIlroy was placed in the custody of Maghaberry Prison on 24 February 2022, he had been in custody for 102 days when he was released, time served. In that time, he completed AD:EPT¹ Pre Release sessions on 15 March and 12 May 2022, with check-in sessions attended on 6 and 21 April 2022. This therapeutic service focused on harm reduction, measuring possible impacts of tolerance levels and sources of support in the wider community for addiction.

While in Maghaberry Prison Mr McIlroy met with his coordinator from the Personal Development Unit (PDU), who was responsible for the coordinated arrangements for his release. Mr McIlroy refused to engage with the PDU coordinator when they attempted to conduct the needs profile interview with him. This interview would have covered areas such as accommodation, finance/benefits and addictions.

Mr McIlroy also received Housing Advice before his release. He had an active Full Duty Application² with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and a hostel referral had also been sent to the housing officer. Mr McIlroy had no other referrals as he stated he knew where to access services/help if needed.

¹ AD:EPT (Alcohol, Drugs: Empowering through Therapy) is a therapeutic service funded by the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust. The service supports individuals in custody who have issues with drugs and/or alcohol.

² Full Duty Application - these are applicants accepted as being homeless, to whom the Housing Executive owes a duty under the Homelessness legislation, Article 10(2) of the Housing (NI) Order, 1988.

Chronology of events leading to Mr McIlroy's death

Mr McIlroy was released from Maghaberry Prison on 6 June 2022 and died three days later on 9 June 2022 at the age of 27. The cause of death recorded on the post mortem was Heroin Toxicity combined with Ketamine and Bromazolam.

On 9 June 2022 at approximately 11:30am, the Police Service of Northern Ireland took Mr McIlroy to the Mater Hospital, Belfast where he was treated for a suspected drug overdose. Mr McIlroy discharged himself from hospital later the same day. At around 21:15 an acquaintance, who was with Mr McIlroy in Lombard Street, noticed he was unresponsive and the emergency services were summoned. Resuscitation was attempted; however, life was pronounced extinct at 21:35.

The Coroner will confirm the cause of death at inquest.

Family Concerns and Findings

Liaison with the deceased's family is a very important aspect of the Ombudsman's role when investigating a death. On 8 September 2022 representatives of the McIlroy family met with the Ombudsman and their concerns were noted and are addressed below:

1. *Patrick telephoned a house telephone and not mobile number - check if Patrick made contact with family member whilst in prison.*

During this period in custody, Mr McIlroy contacted one family member 58 times on the landline number listed on his prison telephone account. The only other number Mr McIlroy had registered to his telephone account was for his solicitor.

2. *Others in custody mentioned that Patrick asked for help whilst he was in prison and it wasn't given.*

From our inquiries, there is no evidence to support this. Mr McIlroy had requested pre-release support from AD:EPT and this was provided.

3. *Why did the Prison Service not phone to say Patrick was released?*

Article 8 of the European Convention for Human rights – Right to respect for private and family life and UKGDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 prohibits sharing personal information without the consent of the individual. As Mr McIlroy was released from custody as 'time served' there was no requirement for him to supply NIPS with an address.

4. *Did Patrick have any complaints whilst he was in custody especially around health care?*

From our investigation, Mr McIlroy had no complaints lodged with the NIPS Internal Complaints Procedure. Healthcare in Prisons (HiP) confirmed they have no record of any formal or informal complaints from Mr McIlroy.

Further questions from the family were provided through their solicitor.

5. *Was there a bail address provided for Patrick? Who arranged the bail address?*

As Mr McIlroy was released from custody as time served, there was no requirement for him to supply an address.

6. Did Patrick attempt to contact his cousin while he was in prison?

From records, the only telephone calls made by Mr McIlroy were to the 2 people listed in his telephone account. There is no record of him having any outgoing mail during this period.

7. What was agreed for Patrick's release? Support Medical referral etc.

Upon his release Mr McIlroy was referred to Department for Communities benefits and housing advice. He was advised to report to the NIHE on Monday. Mr McIlroy was registered with a GP but stated he did not need an appointment as he did not receive any medication. He also had pre-release work completed by AD:EPT and was referred by Healthcare in Prisons (HiP) to the addictions team in March 2022. At the time of his release Mr McIlroy was on the waiting list for assessment for Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) induction. Appointments are scheduled in chronological order and due to resourcing and demand issues it was not possible for Mr McIlroy to be allocated an appointment prior to his release.

8. Is it true that Patrick threw a cup at a Prison Officer and that he was hit by a member of the PS?

There is no evidence to support these claims. Mr McIlroy had no adjudications³ against him during this period in custody nor did he have any complaints lodged against NIPS. There is also no record of him having contacted either the Independent Monitoring Board or this Office to raise any concerns.

9. What mental health support did Patrick have while he was in custody?

Mr McIlroy had a face-to-face mental health triage on 25 February 2022 in which he denied any diagnosis of mental illness. Mr McIlroy was not known to community based mental health services and from the electronic care record there were no outstanding or live referrals. From the information received there was no clinical indication at that time to refer Mr McIlroy for a mental health assessment, though he could be referred at a later stage if indicated. In Mr McIlroy's committal interview he stated he had no history of mental health issues or concerns.

10. What addiction supports did Patrick have while in custody and was he on any waiting lists? To what degree was Patrick suffering withdrawals during his time in custody and was he properly treated for these?

At his committal interview Mr McIlroy had a Clinical Opiate Withdrawal⁴ Scale assessment completed as he stated he had recently smoked heroin. This score was 0. He denied any issues with withdrawal and was advised to contact HiP if required. Mr McIlroy also stated he had no addictions in his comprehensive nursing

³ Adjudications: As per Prison Rules 35 'Laying of disciplinary charges'.

⁴ The Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale (COWS) is an 11-item scale is used to reproducibly rate common signs and symptoms of opiate withdrawal and monitor over time.

assessment carried out on 26 February 2022. He was referred to AD:EPT on 28 February 2022.

11. Was the prison aware that Patrick had a diagnosis of ADHD?

Mr McIlroy's records show on 31 March 2021 he was seen by an Addiction Consultant who recorded "*previous ADHD diagnosis and previous treatment, feels he can manage it now*".

12. Did Patrick see a GP while he was in prison?

Mr McIlroy was not seen by the GP within his last period of custody between 24 February 2022 and 06 June 2022 although case records state blood results were reviewed by GP during this period.

13. Did Patrick's release follow the normal pathway?

NIPS and HiP took the appropriate actions to manage his return into the community.

Conclusions

Based on the information considered, I conclude there are no matters relating to Mr McIlroy's management and care provided by NIPS or the Trust that require further investigation.

Mr McIlroy's case does however highlight a number of broader issues, which impact on the ability of NIPS and its partner agencies to support an individual's rehabilitation particularly relating to short term sentenced prisoners.

The Ombudsman will continue to work with all statutory and voluntary agencies to improve conditions within the custodial environment.

Appendix 1

Glossary

ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
HiP	Healthcare in Prisons
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
PDU	Personal Development Unit
AD:EPT	Alcohol and Drugs: Empowering People through Therapy