



The
**Prisoner
Ombudsman**
for Northern Ireland

OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE

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

MR KIERAN MCGRANDLES

**AGED 30 YEARS
ON 05 MAY 2023
FOLLOWING HIS RELEASE FROM
MAGHABERRY PRISON**

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Foreword from the Prisoner Ombudsman

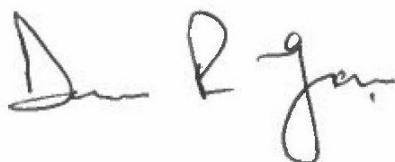
As Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, I have responsibility for investigating, to the extent appropriate, deaths which occur following a prisoner being released from prison custody in Northern Ireland. The investigations are independent of the Northern Ireland Prison Service and our Terms of Reference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

Mr McGrandles was committed to the care of Maghaberry Prison on 10 February 2023 and released on 26 April 2023. Mr McGrandles died of heroin and cocaine toxicity nine days later on 05 May 2023.

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 McGrandles from the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and the processes up to his release.

I offer my condolences to the McGrandles family on the death of Kieran.



Darrin Jones
Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland
06 March 2026

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 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 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 McGrandles was arrested on 09 February 2023. He was assessed while in the custody of the Police Service of Northern Ireland as appearing under the influence of an intoxicating substance and was kept under observation. He was committed to Maghaberry Prison on 10 February 2023.

When Mr McGrandles arrived in Maghaberry Prison on 10 February 2023, he had his committal interview with NIPS staff in which he engaged well. He is noted as experiencing withdrawals from cocaine, alcohol and heroin and said he *“was suffering withdrawals badly at the minute”*. He also saw a Healthcare in Prisons (HiP) nurse who carried out a Self-Administration Risk Assessment to determine if his medications should be self-administered or administered directly by HiP staff. He was assessed as requiring *“supervised swallow”* which meant he would have them administered directly by HiP staff as prescribed.

Mr McGrandles entered custody experiencing withdrawal from cocaine, heroin and alcohol. He was offered support from AD:EPT¹ and was subject to a Mental Health triage where he stated he *“was not good”* and *“things had gone downhill since his previous release”*. He discussed how he had found it difficult to get help as he was neither in the community or prison long enough to be able to engage with services. He reported he had injected cocaine last on 07 February 2023, 2 days prior to his arrest. He requested a referral to the HiP Clinical Addiction Team which was completed for him by Primary Health Care nursing staff.

On 27 March 2023, Mr McGrandles met with his coordinator from the NIPS Prisoner Development Unit (PDU), who was responsible for the arrangements for his release. Mr McGrandles refused to engage with the PDU coordinator when they attempted to conduct a needs profile interview with him. This interview would have covered areas such as accommodation, finance/benefits and addictions.

Mr McGrandles completed an AD:EPT Pre Release session on 20 April 2023. This

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

therapeutic service focused on harm reduction, measuring possible impacts of tolerance levels and sources of support in the wider community for addiction. Mr McGrandles stated he planned to engage with Start 360² and the drug outreach team upon release. A referral was made for Mr McGrandles to attend the drug outreach team on 27 April 2023, the day after his release. Though it is noted, Mr McGrandles did not engage with the team after his release. He was provided with awareness training in relation to Naloxone³ by AD:EPT however, he did not inform HiP he was being released and therefore was not supplied with a Naloxone kit prior to his release.

There have been changes in the process relating to Naloxone since the death of Mr McGrandles, whereby, once Naloxone training has been given to someone, a card is placed in their possessions which advises HiP should be contacted to provide a Naloxone kit prior to their release.

Following his release, letters were sent to Mr McGrandles' GP advising he had been allocated for a routine mental health assessment to assess his suitability to engage in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (to be completed within 12 weeks) but had been released prior to this occurring. The letters requested Mr McGrandles' GP discuss his current mental health needs with him at any future reviews and refer him to the appropriate community service if he still wanted it. They also advised Mr McGrandles had been referred to the Mental Health Team on committal for an assessment but had been released before this could be carried out. They asked consideration to be given to an onward referral to the Mental Health Service on a routine basis. They also advised Mr McGrandles had been referred to the HiP Addictions Team and was waiting for an assessment, so would benefit from a referral to the Community Addictions Team.

² Start 360 delivers a range of person-centred services to young people, adults, families and communities across Northern Ireland.

³ Naloxone is an opioid antagonist used to reverse opioid overdoses.

In a previous period of custody, Mr McGrandles participated in a television programme. The programme was aired in September 2023, some four months after Mr McGrandles' death. While not seen as directly linked to Mr McGrandles' death, the decision to allow Mr McGrandles to participate and the role of NIPS is a matter of concern for the McGrandles family. I have raised this matter with NIPS and will share my findings with the family in due course.

Chronology of events leading to Mr McGrandles' death

Mr McGrandles had been in custody in Maghaberry Prison for 76 days when he was released on 26 April 2023, time served. He died nine days later on 05 May 2023 at the age of 30.

On 05 May 2023 at approximately 09:45 the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service was called to an apartment off the Ormeau Road in Belfast. On arrival the ambulance crew found Mr McGrandles lying on his back unresponsive on a sofa bed in one of the bedrooms. He showed no signs of life and resuscitation was not commenced. Life was recognised as extinct at 09:58.

The cause of death recorded on the post mortem report is Heroin and Cocaine toxicity combined with Bromazolam⁴, Gabapentin⁵, Diazepam⁶, Pregabalin⁷, Zopiclone⁸ and Escitalopram⁹.

The Coroner will confirm the cause of death at inquest.

⁴ Bromazolam is a potent, illicit synthetic benzodiazepine.

⁵ Gabapentin is a prescription-only medication primarily used to treat epilepsy and certain types of nerve pain.

⁶ Diazepam is a benzodiazepine medication used to treat anxiety, muscle spasms and seizures.

⁷ Pregabalin is a prescription medication used to treat nerve pain, anxiety and certain types of seizures.

⁸ Zopiclone is a prescription sedative-hypnotic medication used for short term treatment of severe insomnia.

⁹ Escitalopram is a prescription antidepressant used primarily to treat depression, anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Conclusions

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

Mr McGrandles' 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.

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

I make the following recommendation to NIPS and the Trust:

To roll out the introduction of the Take Home Naloxone programme in Maghaberry Prison to mirror what is available in Magilligan Prison. This would enable release packs to be stored within lockers at the exit of the prison and to be offered to everyone upon release.

Appendix 1

Glossary

HiP	Healthcare in Prisons
NIPS	Northern Ireland Prison Service
PDU	Prisoner Development Unit
the Trust	South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust