

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
By Email

13 May 2020

Dear Committee for Health, Social Care and Sport

Re: Inquiry into the Covid-19 outbreak in Wales

Thank you for contacting us about the above inquiry.

My role

My office carries out independent investigations into deaths and complaints in custody. The PPO's role and responsibilities are set out in detail in our terms of reference¹.

We have two main duties:

- To investigate complaints made by prisoners, young people in detention (young offender institutions and secure training centres), offenders under probation supervision and immigration detainees.
- To investigate deaths of prisoners, young people in detention (including residents in secure children's homes), approved premises' residents and immigration detainees due to any cause, including any apparent suicides and natural causes.

The purpose of these investigations is to understand what happened, to correct injustices and to identify learning for the organisations whose actions we oversee so that we can make a significant contribution to safer, fairer custody and offender supervision.

In relation to prisons, my role extends across England and Wales.

My submission to the inquiry into the Covid-19 outbreak in Wales


The PPO have been informed of 21 Covid-19 related deaths of prisoners across England and Wales. One of these cases was a prisoner from HMP Usk who died in hospital. The investigations into the deaths are ongoing and therefore we do not have any learnings or findings to report at this stage. We do not normally publish our reports until after the inquest has taken place in order to avoid any risk of influencing the inquest.

¹ www.ppo.gov.uk/about/vision-and-values/terms-of-reference/

The PPO does not investigate complaints that relate to the clinical judgment of medical professionals. However, there are complaints that touch upon issues of health and social care. At this time, we have not completed any investigations into Covid-19 related complaints, however we will submit further evidence if any becomes available.

I hope that this is helpful. Please get in touch if you require any additional information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue McAllister', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sue McAllister CB
Prisons and Probation Ombudsman