

**A report by the Office of the Inspector of
Prisons into the circumstances surrounding
the death of Prisoner N
on 14 August 2015 in Castlerea Prison**

***Please note that names have been removed to anonymise this Report**

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**A report by the Office of the Inspector of Prisons into the
circumstances surrounding the death of Prisoner N on 14
August 2015 in Castlerea Prison**

Presented to the Tánaiste and Minister for Justice and Equality
pursuant to Part 5 of the Prisons Act 2007

Helen Casey
Office of the Inspector of Prisons

21 February 2017

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Preface

The deceased was a 29 year old man from the Midlands area who died in Castlereagh Prison on 14 August 2015 while in the custody of the Irish Prison Service.

As part of this investigation officials from the Inspectorate met the deceased's partner. The Inspectorate offers its sincere condolences to his partner and extended family.

The names have been removed to anonymise this Report.

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Office of the Inspector of Prisons Investigation Report

General Information

1. The deceased was a 29 year old man from the Midlands region. He is survived by his partner, mother and extended family.
2. The deceased was remanded to Castlerea Prison on 8 August 2015. His remand date was 14 August 2015 at Harristown District Court.
3. At approximately 00.07 hours on 14 August 2015 the deceased was discovered in an unresponsive state in his single cell (Cell 28 on A1 landing). He had a ligature around his neck which was attached to the bars on the step ladder leading to the top bunk in the cell.
4. Officials from the Inspectorate met the deceased's partner on 8 September 2015. We have addressed in this report a concern which she wanted investigated.

Status of the deceased in prison

5. The deceased was classed as an 'ordinary prisoner'. He was on the standard level of the Incentivised Regime and on remand at the time of his death. He had served previous sentences, the last of which he completed on 21 July 2015.

Meeting with family

6. Officials from the Office of the Inspector of Prisons met the deceased's partner on 8 September 2015 and she confirmed that she visited the deceased on Thursday 13 August 2015 in Castlerea Prison. She gave us a short history and background of the deceased. She informed us that "*the deceased was released from Cork Prison on 21 July 2015 at 12 noon. The deceased had*

served 6 years and 9 months of a sentence". She stated that the deceased was *"very stressed when out of prison but was more content in prison"*. She further informed us that *"he attended the school, gym and the workshops while in prison"*.

7. She raised a number issues with the Inspectorate that she wished to have addressed. The majority of concerns raised were of an operational nature and related to his previous sentence which he completed on 29 July 2015 and do not form part of this investigation. These concerns have been dealt with directly with the next of kin.
8. The one concern relevant to this investigation, was her query as to why the officer on the landing who found the deceased did not have a key to open the cell door. The Irish Prison Service Procedure on the custody of the Master key for unlocking cells during periods of lock down directs that the Supervising Officer is the sole person in possession of the key.
9. The deceased's partner visited the cell at Castlerea Prison on 15 August 2015. She was given some personal belongings of the deceased.

Sequence of events

10. The deceased was committed to Castlerea prison on 8 August 2015 on foot of a District Court Warrant which remanded him in custody to Harristown District Court on Friday 14 August 2015. There was no consent to bail.
11. His committal interview was conducted by Assistant Governor A on 9 August 2015. It was determined that the deceased had no protection requirements and was not regarded as vulnerable. He had no stated medical conditions and did not require to be placed on the Special Observation list. He was placed on the Standard Level of Incentivised Regime.

12. The deceased reported that he had tripped on the A1 stairs on 11 August 2015. He attended the surgery and was seen by Nurse Officer A who stated:-

“came to surgery alleges slipped off the bottom step of A1 stairs – not witnessed – claims he crawled to surgery – I found him sitting outside surgery door, on examination of his right ankle no obvious bruising or swelling states has severe pain colour movement sensation present states unable to wgt bear ice pack tubigrip and brufen given for pain will rv again later advised to rest in his cell”.
13. On Thursday 13 August 2015 the deceased had a visit from his partner at Castlereagh Prison at 10.15 hrs. It was reported that his partner was in a stressed state during the visit. It was further reported that the deceased continued to avail of recreation and associated with fellow prisoners for the remainder of the day and returned to his cell for the night at 19.24 hrs. On checking the phone records the deceased made three calls on 13 August 2015 at approx. 15.18 hrs to his partner. Two calls were unsuccessful and the third call ended after 1 minute 18 seconds.
14. The Night Guard, Officer A took up duty on A1 at 19.00 hrs on 13 August 2015 and he can be seen on CCTV conducting his first check of the prisoners in his care at 19.31 hrs and the officer checks cell 28 at 19.33 hrs. The deceased was checked four times between 19.31 hrs and 23.04 hrs. One of these checks also included a medication round conducted by Nurse Officer B who spoke to the deceased and reported that he was in good spirits. She stated that *“he appeared pleasant, calm and relaxed. He reported looking forward to his release date on Monday 17 August”.*
15. At 00.04 hrs Officer A can be seen again checking the deceased’s cell. On this occasion he is concerned by what he sees. The deceased was sitting on the floor with his back against the step ladder of the bunk bed. The officer can be seen kicking the bottom of the cell door which is common practice of prison officers when seeking a response from the occupants of a cell. He got no response. He summons assistance from other staff members. The night

staff responded promptly to the Officer's request for assistance and arrived at the scene within three minutes. It was only when they entered the cell they realised that the deceased was hanging from the step ladder of the bed. The Assistant Chief Officer ACO A left to retrieve the Hoffman knife which is used to safely remove a ligature. Medical assistance was immediately rendered to the deceased with Nurse Officer B and ACO A administering CPR until the Ambulance personnel arrived. Once the Ambulance personnel arrived they took charge of the casualty and their attempts to resuscitate the deceased were unsuccessful and the treatment ceased at 01.20 hrs.

16. The deceased's next of kin was informed of the death as were senior officials in the Irish Prison Service and members of An Garda Síochána. The Chaplain was informed and he attended at 03.30 hrs and administered the last rites.
17. The death was notified to the Coroner and the remains could not be removed until authorised to do so by the Coroner. We were informed by the Irish Prison Service that West Doc had refused to attend the prison to certify the death. At 05.50 hrs the services of Dr A were secured. She pronounced death at 05.56 hrs. The remains left the prison at 12.04 hrs on 14 August 2015 and were brought by the undertaker, accompanied by a member of An Garda Síochána, for a post mortem examination to Tullamore Hospital.
18. The cell was searched thoroughly by members of the Irish Prison Service Operational Support Group and it was confirmed that the deceased did not leave a suicide note. When we met the deceased partner she was aware of this.

Findings

19. The deceased was on the standard regime of the Incentivised Regime at the time of his death.
20. The deceased was alone in a double cell.
21. The deceased was on medication for pain at the time of his death.
22. The deceased did not leave a suicide note.
23. The deceased did not have any contact with the Psychology Service while on remand.
24. On his last committal the deceased was assessed and did not require protection, was not classed a vulnerable prisoner, had no medical conditions and was not a special observation prisoner.
25. The Night Guard conducted his checks in accordance with standard operating procedures. Up to the midnight patrol the night guard had checked on the deceased and other prisoners on four occasions.
26. As soon as the alarm was raised there was an immediate response from prison officers and prison medical personnel.
27. The deceased was pronounced dead at 5.56 hrs on 14 August 2015.
28. The cause of death is a matter for the Coroner.

Recommendations

1. The difficulty is securing a Doctor to pronounce death should be taken up with the relevant authority.