



**Oifig An Chigire Príosún**  
**Office of the Inspector of Prisons**

# **Death in Custody Investigation Report**

Mr. T 2023

Reviewable

Temporary Release from

Limerick Prison

16 November 2023

Aged 31

To the Minister: 12 December 2025

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# GLOSSARY

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IPS	Irish Prison Service
NoK	Next of Kin
OIP	Office of the Inspector of Prisons
RTR	Reviewable Temporary Release
UAL	Unlawfully at Large

# INTRODUCTION

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## 1. Preface

- 1.1 The Office of the Inspector of Prisons (OIP) was established under the Prisons Act 2007 (the Act). Since 2012, the Chief Inspector of Prisons has been obliged to investigate all deaths in prison custody. This includes the death of any person which occurs within one month of their temporary release from prison custody. The OIP also carries out regular inspections of prisons. The Office is independent of the Irish Prison Service (IPS). The Chief Inspector of Prisons and the staff of the OIP are independent of the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration in the performance of their statutory functions.
- 1.2 The OIP can make recommendations for improvement where appropriate. Our investigation reports are published by the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, subject to the provisions of the Act, in order that investigation findings and recommendations can be disseminated in the interest of public transparency, to promote best practice in the care of prisoners.

## 2. Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of investigations of deaths in custody are to:
  - Establish the circumstances and events surrounding the death, including the care provided by the IPS;
  - Examine whether any changes in IPS operational methods, policy, practice or management arrangements could help prevent a similar death in the future;
  - Ensure that the prisoner's family have an opportunity to raise any concerns they may have and take these into account in the investigation; and
  - Assist the Coroner's investigation and contribute to meeting the State's obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, by ensuring, as far as possible, that the full facts are brought to light and any relevant failing is exposed, any commendable practice is identified, and any lessons from the death are learned.

## 3. Methodology

- 3.1 Our standard investigation methodology aims to thoroughly explore and analyse all aspects of each case. It comprises interviews with staff, prisoners, next of kin (NoK); analysis of prison records in relation to the deceased's life while in custody; and examination of evidence, such as CCTV footage and phone calls.
- 3.2 This report is structured to detail the events leading up to Mr. T's death while on Reviewable Temporary Release (RTR) from prison on 16 November 2023.

## 4. Administration of Investigation

- 4.1 On 17 November 2023, the OIP was notified that Mr. T had passed away while on RTR from Limerick Prison.
- 4.2 Prison Management provided the OIP with all relevant information in accordance with the standardised checklist of information required.
- 4.3 The cause of death is a matter for the Coroner.

## 5. Family Liaison

- 5.1 Liaison with the deceased's family is a very important aspect of the Inspectorate of Prisons' role when investigating a death in custody.
- 5.2 The OIP investigation team communicated with Mr. T's NoK, his sister, on 28 August 2024. The NoK declined the opportunity to meet with the investigation team and informed them that she had no questions in respect of the death of Mr. T.
- 5.3 Although this report is for the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, it may also inform several interested parties.

# INVESTIGATION

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## 6. Limerick Prison

- 6.1 Limerick Prison is a closed, medium security prison for adults. It is the committal prison for men for counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary and for women for all six Munster counties. At the time of Mr. T's death it had an operational capacity of 286 beds and on 16 November 2023, it was holding 325 prisoners. This represents 114% of total capacity.
- 6.2 At the time of his death, Mr. T's was the fourth death of a prisoner from Limerick Prison in 2023; and the twentieth death in IPS custody that year.

## 7. Background

- 7.1 Mr. T was a 31 year old male from the Munster area. He was committed to Limerick Prison on 30 October 2022. At the time of his death, he had been serving prison sentences totaling 18 months. In passing sentence, the Court suspended three months of his 21 month sentence on condition that he comply with all directions and instructions of the Probation Service for a period of 6 months following his release from prison.
- 7.2 Mr. T was on the standard level of the Incentivised Regime<sup>1</sup> but had a good disciplinary record during his time in custody, which was considered when granting him RTR. Mr. T was released on RTR on 9 November 2023. The reason for Mr. T's temporary release was recorded as: "*Pre-release/resocialisation*". Mr. T was released to reside with his brother who is now also sadly deceased.
- 7.3 Mr. T did not return to Limerick Prison on 16 November 2023 to sign on as scheduled, and as a result he was deemed unlawfully at large.
- 7.4 On 17 November 2023 Prison management became aware that Mr. T had been found deceased the previous day.

## 8. Reviewable Temporary Release

- 8.1 The IPS provided the investigation team with a copy of Mr. T's RTR Form which stipulated the following ten conditions:
1. *"Be under the supervision of the Probation Service, including attending all appointments directed by supervising officer & cooperating with all lawful directions of supervising officer"*
  2. *Be of Good Behaviour*
  3. *Do not convey messages in/out of Prison*
  4. *Keep the Peace*

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<sup>1</sup> Within the Irish prison system there are three levels of regime – basic, standard and enhanced, with different privileges associated with each regime level. All prisoners enter the system at standard regime level and have the opportunity to become eligible for the enhanced regime status once they have met the required criteria for the preceding two months.

5. *Report to [named] (24h) Garda Station within 24 hours of release & daily thereafter to get TR form stamped*
  6. *Return to Limerick Prison on date and time listed above [16 November 2023 at 11:00]*
  7. *Shall be of sober habits*
  8. *Shall not enter a pub, club or other licensed premises or off-license premises*
  9. *Shall reside at [specified address]*
  10. *Agree not to change address from [Specified] without new TR form”*
- 8.2 The first condition of Mr. T’s RTR required him to attend all appointments with the Probation Service. The Probation Service confirmed that Mr. T did attend one appointment with a community probation officer following his release.
- 8.3 A further condition of Mr. T’s RTR was to sign on daily at a specific Garda station. The investigation team confirmed that Mr. T signed on at the Garda station on the following dates:
- 10 November at 09:16
  - 11 November at 09:53
  - 13 November at 11:45
  - 14 November at 14:40
  - 15 November at 16:52
- 8.4 There is no record of Mr. T having signed on at the Garda station on 12 November 2023. He did however sign the Temporary Release Book at the Garda station on the three subsequent days.
- 8.5 Mr. T was due to report back, and sign on, at Limerick Prison on 16 November 2023. As he failed to report, the IPS declared him unlawfully at large (UAL).
- 8.6 On 17 November 2023, the Gardaí informed prison management that Mr. T had been discovered deceased at a residential building on 16 November 2023.

## 9. Medical Records

- 9.1 Medical records were obtained from the IPS with the consent of Mr. T’s NoK. The records indicated that Mr. T. had experienced alcohol dependency. Mr. T informed Nurse A, during his committal interview on 30 October 2022, that he had been abusing alcohol since he was 15 years old. Mr. T informed Nurse A that, “*he had been drinking alcohol in excess for the last week.*” Nurse A recorded that Mr. T appeared “*alert and orientated*” during the interview.
- 9.2 Mr. T’s prison clinical records, in respect of a previous committal in 2020, noted that in addition to ongoing alcohol misuse, Mr. T admitted using opiates, “benzos”<sup>2</sup> and cocaine. During his time in custody in 2020, Mr. T was prescribed Librium detox medication.

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<sup>2</sup> Benzodiazepines (benzos) are a group of prescription drugs used to treat anxiety and depression. Source: Drugs.ie (HSE).

## 10. Recommendations

10.1 The OIP makes no recommendations.

## 11. Support Organisations

11.1 Those who are affected by a death in custody can obtain assistance or advice from a number of charities and support groups. The Office of the Inspector of Prisons has an information pamphlet for relatives and friends of someone who dies in the custody of a prison. Further information can be found on the OIP website at [www.oip.ie](http://www.oip.ie).