

**INQUEST OPENS INTO DEATH IN POLICE CUSTODY OF BLACK  
DETAINEE CHRISTOPHER ALDER  
29<sup>th</sup> June 2000**

Monday 3 July, 10am  
Crown Court  
Lowgate, Hull

The inquest opens on 3<sup>rd</sup> July into the death of Christopher Alder, a 37 year old black man from Hull who died on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1998 after being arrested and taken to Queens Gardens Police Station.

He was arrested at Hull Royal Infirmary where he had been taken after a fight outside a nightclub. He was taken in a police van to the police station. He was supported into the custody suite and after 12 minutes police officers called an ambulance. However despite resuscitation attempts Mr Alder died.

The jury at the inquest will have to consider the evidence of over 100 hundred witnesses and will also view video evidence of the events in the custody suite. It will need to establish the nature of the standard of care afforded Christopher whilst in the custody of the police and the adequacy of police training in restraint and the dangers of positional asphyxia. The jury will have to consider a range of medical evidence after hearing about the events which led to Mr Alder's death and decide on the exact cause of death.

The inquest is expected to last between four and five weeks. INQUEST Lawyers Group member Leslie Thomas is representing Mr Alder's sister. Eight other parties including the Chief Constable, five individual officers and the hospital are all being separately represented.

The inquest is the first opportunity that Christopher's sister Janet Alder has had to find out about the full circumstances about his death and the conduct of those with responsibility for his care.

Helen Shaw Co Director of INQUEST, the advice and campaign group concerned with deaths in custody said:

*"This is a case of significant public interest which will raise questions about the treatment of black people in police custody and the dangers of restraint. We remain deeply concerned that the lessons from previous deaths have not been learnt."*

Note to Editors

It is significant in this case that the Lord Chancellor has granted that exceptional legal aid after representations from INQUEST and the family lawyers.

INQUEST has drawn national and international attention to the disproportionate number of deaths of black people in police custody following the use of force or gross medical neglect. There have been detailed Coroners Recommendations on police training on restraint and the dangers of positional asphyxia. At the inquest in October 1997 of Ibrahim Sey the jury returned a verdict of 'unlawful killing' after they heard how he had been handcuffed, sprayed with CS spray in the face

# n q u e s t

and held face down. The Coroner warned Chief Constables about “grave public concerns” about methods of restraint and positional asphyxia.

INQUEST the legal advice and campaign group concerned with deaths in custody has been working with Mr Alder’s family and their lawyers. We will be monitoring the inquest and commenting on its conclusion.