

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION 19th September 2003

BEVERLEY FOWLER INQUEST VERDICT RETURNED

The inquest into the death of Jamaican National found hanging in her cell in HMP Durham returned an open verdict. It ends a five-day inquest in which the coroner held a full investigation into the facts surrounding her death. Beverley had fallen victim to a drug trafficking gang and was forced to carry illegal drugs into the UK. She had also been the subject of a violent gang rape. As a result of both, she had become very down.

Beverley Fowler died on October 2nd 2002 whilst in the custody of HMP DURHAM. She was found hanging from a curtain rail in her cell at 5.23pm.

Beverley, a Jamaican national and a mother of three, was due to be released and deported back to Jamaica from HMP Durham on October 4th 2002. She was found hanging just two days before her release. The inquest revealed how little was done to help Beverley to prepare for her deportation to Jamaica where she had previously faced threats and violence. On the morning of her death, following an altercation with an inmate who had been bullying her for several weeks Beverley was moved out of her cell and relocated on the basic unit to await an adjudication the following day. It was there where she was found hanging later on in the day.

Beverley is one of four women who took their own lives at HMP Durham over a 9-month period (from August 2002 to May 2003). Prior to this there had been no deaths there for 12 years. This spate of deaths has coincided with a massive 150% increase in the female prisoners at HMP Durham. At any one time up to 20-25% of these women prisoners could be a special suicide watch. This raises serious concerns about overcrowding within the prison and whether prison staff are able to cope with such a high level of vulnerability within the prison.

INQUEST is concerned about the unprecedented number of women's deaths in women's prisons during the last 12 months and believes that it raises serious concerns about the care and treatment of women in the Prison system.

Further Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web: www.inquest.org.uk • Email: communications@inquest.org.uk • Phone: 020 7263 1111
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Appendix:

Deaths of women in Prison 2002-2003:

Classification	2002	2003	Total
Self-Inflicted	9	11	20
Non-Self-Inflicted	2	1	3

Deaths at HMP Durham 1990-2003:

Name	Ethnicity	Age	Status	Date	Classification	Verdict

Jayne Buck	UK White	28	Convicted	01/05/03	Self-Inflicted	Awaited
Sue Stevens	White	48	Convicted	21/02/03	Self-Inflicted	Awaited
Beverly Fowler	Black	32	Convicted	02/10/02	Self-Inflicted	Awaited
Diana Schooling	UK White	52	Convicted	19/08/02	Self-Inflicted	Awaited
Linda Tandy	UK White	35	Convicted	04/06/90	Self-Inflicted	Unknown