

Tuesday 23rd March 2004

Joseph Scholes Memorial Vigil at HM YOI Stoke Heath Tomorrow at Noon.

At twelve noon tomorrow Yvonne Scholes, mother of 16 year old Joseph Scholes who died at Stoke Heath Young Offenders Institute on 24th March 2002, will be holding a vigil in memory of her son to mark the second anniversary of his death.

Joseph hanged himself from the bars of his cell one-month after his sixteenth birthday, just nine days into a two-year sentence for street robbery.

Yvonne will be laying a wreath at the prison then releasing 25 balloons each with the name of the 25 boys who have died in young offender institutions since 1990.

INQUEST has been working with Yvonne since Joseph died and continues to be concerned that many of the issues that need to be explored in Joseph's death are outside the current remit of the inquest system. Joseph's inquest will begin on April 19th 2004 at Shrewsbury magistrates court and is expected to last between two and three weeks.

On November 11th 2003 INQUEST joined forces with crime reduction charity Nacro to call for a public inquiry into Joseph's death as the current inadequate remit of an inquest means many of the important systemic issues raised by his death will not be explored. The Jubilee Room in the House of Commons was packed with journalists, Lords, Baronesses and MP's, all anxious to support this call. We are still awaiting a response from the government.

Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST says, "Joseph Scholes was one of 25 young children to die in prison. The call for a public inquiry is motivated by the urgent need to address what is a serious and deeply disturbing human rights issue – the suffering and deaths of children while in custody of the state."

Yvonne Scholes, Joseph's mother says;

"We have had two years of pain and anguish fuelled by the Home Office's reluctance to hold a public inquiry in Joseph's death. The focus of tomorrow is to remember Joseph but also to try and draw something positive and beautiful from his death rather than to dwell on this sadness. The balloons are symbolic and represent the freedom of the 25 boys who have died. When we found out that Joseph was one of 25 who had died in similar circumstances, we saw a clear pattern."