

**INQUEST SUPPORTS ELECTION CAMPAIGN LAUNCH
“PRISON IS NO PLACE FOR CHILDREN”**

PRESS RELEASE EMBARGOED 10 am 7 APRIL 2005

**Press Conference
10 am Thursday 7 April
Committee Room 8
House of Commons
St Stephen's entrance**

INQUEST, Hilton Dawson MP and other voluntary organisations are calling on prospective parliamentary candidates to commit themselves to ending the use of penal custody for children and for an end to the deaths of children imprisoned by the state.

INQUEST is the only organisation that works directly with bereaved families following a death in custody to provide an independent free legal and advice service on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts. We are working with the families of Gareth Myatt and Adam Rickwood, two children who died in penal custody in 2004.

Deborah Coles, co-director of the organisation INQUEST, said: “Despite widespread cross party support and a recommendation from the parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights, the government continues to resist calls for a public inquiry into death of 16-year-old Joseph Scholes. Deaths of children in the custody of the state are a serious human rights issue and one that MPs of all parties must address.”

Yvonne Scholes, mother of Joseph Scholes, said: “When a child dies in a foster home or in the care of the social services there is a national outcry. Why should it be any different when a child dies in prison? Once again people with knowledge and power meet to call for a public inquiry into my son's death, will the government listen this time?”

Notes to Editors

Speakers at the campaign launch will include: Hilton Dawson MP, Deborah Coles, co-director, INQUEST and Frances Crook, Director, Howard League for Penal Reform.

The supporting organisations are: INQUEST, Barnardo's, Children's Rights Alliance England, The Children's Society, The Howard League for Penal Reform, Prison Reform Trust, Nacro, Voice for the Child in Care

Since 1990 28 children have died in penal custody, one of whom was black, the majority of which were self-inflicted. One of these deaths followed the use of restraint.