

For immediate release THURSDAY JANUARY 6th 2005

INQUEST INTO WOMAN'S DEATH IN STYAL PRISON BEGINS

Monday 10 January 2005, 2.00 pm

HM Coroner Mr N L Rheinberg

Sitting at:

Warrington Town Hall,

Sankey Street,

Warrington,

Cheshire,

WA1 1UH

The inquest into the death of 18-year-old **Sarah Elizabeth Campbell** will start on January 10 2005 at 2.00 pm and is expected to last two weeks.

Sarah Campbell was an 18-year-old woman who died on 18 January 2003 while in the care and custody of Styal prison. She had a long history of mental health problems which were well known to HMP Styal and at the time of her death she was on suicide watch. Sarah had also been a drug user since the age of 16, though she had been drug-free for eight months at the time of her death. She had been on remand in Styal for six months and then spent two months on bail living with her mother. On 17 January 2003 she was sentenced and returned to Styal. The following day she is believed to have swallowed a large amount of prescription tablets and was taken unconscious to hospital where she died later that evening.

Sarah was one of six women in HMP Styal to die in a twelve-month period between August 2002 and August 2003. Prison Inspectorate reports on Styal prison have identified systemic failings in the treatment and care of women withdrawing from drugs and this inquest will again raise concerns about the treatment and care of women with drug and mental health problems.

Deborah Coles co-director of INQUEST said:

“This inquest is the first opportunity for the death of Sarah Campbell to be subject to public scrutiny. INQUEST is working with many of the families of the women who have died in Styal and our frustration is with the failure of the State to learn the lessons arising from these deaths.”

Pauline Campbell, Sarah's mother who has been campaigning on deaths of women in prison since her daughter's death said:

“The appalling circumstances of Sarah's death still haunt me. She was a vulnerable teenager, with a history of depression and I believe her tragic death could have been avoided. I am confident that my daughter's inquest will highlight a great injustice - not only

about the way Sarah was treated, but also the fact that women are being detained in prisons that cannot meet their human rights. It leaves an ugly stain on the record of Her Majesty's prison service.”

Note to Editors

A press conference will be held at the conclusion of the inquest with Pauline Campbell, Sarah's mother and Deborah Coles co-director of INQUEST.

Pauline Campbell will be represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members Richard Hermer, Doughty Street Chambers instructed by Mark Scott, Bhatt Murphy, Solicitors.

INQUEST is working with a number of families of the women who died at HMP Styal and continues to be shocked by the rising death toll of women in prison. Last year there were 13 self-inflicted deaths of women in prison. In 2003 there were 14 self-inflicted deaths of women in prison.

INQUEST is the only non-governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families of those who die in custody. It provides an independent free legal and advice service to bereaved people on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts.

Deaths of Women in HMP Styal August 2002 - August 2003							
Name	Classification	Establishment	Ethnicity	Age	Status	Cause	Date Of Death
Julie Bernadette Walsh	Self-Inflicted	HMP Styal	UK White	39	Convicted	Overdose	12/08/2003
Hayley Williams	Self-Inflicted	HMP Styal	UK White	41	Convicted	Hanging	04/06/2003
Jolene Willis	Self-Inflicted	HMP Styal	UK White	25	Convicted	Hanging	20/04/2003
Sarah Campbell	Self-Inflicted	HMP Styal	UK White	18	Convicted	Overdose	18/01/2003
Anna Baker	Self-Inflicted	HMP Styal	UK Black	29	Remanded	Hanging	26/11/2002
Nissa Ann Smith	Self-Inflicted	HMP Styal	UK White	20	Remanded	Hanging	10/08/2002

Source: INQUEST Casework and monitoring