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**FAMILY OF CHILD WHO DIED IN PRISON TO CHALLENGE
GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO SET UP A PUBLIC INQUIRY**

18 and 19 July 2006

Court of Appeal

Royal Courts of Justice, London

On Tuesday 18 July at the Royal Courts of Justice in London, the Court of Appeal is hearing an application challenging the refusal of the Government to hold a public inquiry into the death in prison of 16 year-old Joseph Scholes.

At the end of the inquest into his death the coroner wrote to the Secretary of State and recommended under his powers to prevent further deaths that a public inquiry be held into issues that were outside the remit of the inquest. To date, no such public inquiry has been held.

Yvonne Scholes, Joseph's mother said,

I hope with all my heart that the Court will see sense and identify the urgent need for a public inquiry into my son's death. The fact that there has never been an inquiry disgusts me. If this was a death in social services there would be an outcry, the fact that my son died at the hands of a different state body, should pose no difference.

Speaking at a parliamentary meeting on deaths of children in custody held last week, Lord David Ramsbotham said:

I have noticed that the Prime Minister wants to rebalance the scales of justice in favour of the victims. If he really means this, what better illustration could he give than announcing that he is going to allow a public inquiry and press for it as soon as possible?

Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST said:

The call for a public inquiry remains urgent and pressing, particularly in light of the five further deaths of children in state custody since Joseph died. The government's resistance to the opportunity that a public inquiry would offer to examine the wider concerns such deaths raise flies in the face of their message that every child matters. It appears that children's deaths in custody clearly do not matter.

Mark Scott, solicitor for the Scholes family said:

A public inquiry would provide an opportunity to examine the way in which vulnerable children are dealt with by the criminal justice system in order that proper lessons can be learned.

Yvonne Scholes' need to know why her son died and to prevent future deaths of children has inspired a nation-wide campaign for justice, winning support from all the major penal reform, child welfare and human rights groups. Early Day Motion 2410 was tabled in the House of Commons by her constituency MP Chris Ruane on 20 June 2006 renewing the call for a public inquiry, and has already received 68 signatories to date.

INQUEST has provided detailed evidence to the Court about the issues of concern regarding Joseph's treatment and care and why a public inquiry into those issues could have a significant impact on the future safeguarding of children's lives.

Further Information	www.inquest.org.uk
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Note to Editors

- On 24 March 2002 Joseph Scholes, a deeply vulnerable and disturbed boy with a history of self harm and suicide attempts hanged himself from the bars of his cell in Stoke Heath Young Offenders Institution. The inquest into his death heard very disturbing evidence about the treatment and care of Joseph while in Stoke Heath. Despite a well conducted inquest there were crucial issues that were outside the remit of the inquest including juvenile sentencing policy, pre sentence and placement procedures and the adequacy of the juvenile estate to accommodate vulnerable young people.
- Since 1990, 29 children aged 14-17 years old have died in penal custody, five of these dying after Joseph Scholes
- The Court of Appeal application R (on the application of Mrs Yvonne Scholes v The Secretary Of State For The Home Department) will take place in the High Court on 18th and 19th July at 10.00hrs. Counsel for the family are Tim Owen QC (Matrix Chambers) and Hugh Southey (Took Court Chambers) instructed by Mark Scott solicitor at Bhatt Murphy solicitors.
- Interviews with the family of Joseph Scholes can be arranged in advance of the Court of Appeal hearing.
- A detailed briefing paper outlining the case for a public inquiry, *Why Are Children Dying In Custody?*, is available from the INQUEST website.