

For immediate release 4 OCTOBER 2006

INQUEST OPENS INTO DEATH OF TEENAGER IN TROUBLED YOUNG OFFENDER INSTITUTION STOKE HEATH

10am Thursday 5 October 2006

Sitting with HM Coroner for the Mid and North Division, Mr J Ellery
at Shrewsbury Magistrates Court,
The Court House,
Preston Street,
Shrewsbury,
Shropshire SY2 5NX.

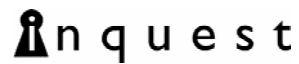
Karl Lewis, an 18 year-old man, was found hanging in his cell at HM Young Offenders' Institute Stoke Heath at approximately 1am on the morning of 22 January 2005. The inquest into his death begins on Thursday 5 October 2006. It is expected to last 10 days.

Karl arrived at HMYOI Stoke Heath on 8 October the previous year. During the next three months he would be placed on four separate self harm monitoring forms due to the risk of suicide he posed. The last of these forms was opened hours before he was found hanging in his cell. Karl's family have a number of concerns about the information given to the prison by Social Services and the Youth Offending Service and the care he received while he was a prisoner at HMYOI Stoke Heath. Karl's family hope that the inquest answers the following concerns:

- Whether pre-sentence reports were adequately prepared and whether they had appropriately assessed or even considered the risk Karl posed to himself;
- whether the Karl's vulnerability and risk of self harm was fully appreciated by staff at the prison;
- whether the day to day management of this risk, once recognised by the prison, was appropriately managed and whether the correct procedures were followed;
- whether any delay in entering Karl's cell once he was seen to be hanging contributed to his death.

Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST said:

"This death raises serious questions about the treatment and care of vulnerable prisoners in Stoke Heath. Having worked closely with the family of 16 year old Joseph Scholes who also died in Stoke Heath, it appears that important questions are once again raised about the use of prison for those with mental health problems and whether lessons from previous deaths are learned."



Since the early 1990s INQUEST has worked with the families of many of the children and young people who have taken their own lives in Young Offenders Institutions. The inquests into their deaths have raised serious questions about the care and management of vulnerable young prisoners.

INQUEST Lawyers Group solicitor Carolynn Gallwey of Bhatt Murphy Solicitors and barrister Paul Bowen of Doughty Street Chambers are representing the family. Interviews with the family will be given at the conclusion of the inquest.

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