

For immediate release 27 April 2007

INQUEST OPENS INTO DEATH IN CUSTODY OF 14 YEAR OLD ADAM RICKWOOD

10.00am Tuesday 1 May 2007 (formal evidence to commence)
Before HM Coroner for County Durham Andrew Tweddle
Sitting at Chester-le-street Magistrates Court, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-street,
Co. Durham DH3 3UA

The inquest into the death of 14 year old Adam Rickwood in Hassockfield Secure Training Centre in August 2004 will open for formal evidence on Tuesday 1 May. Adam Rickwood was the youngest child to die in penal custody. He was found hanging in his room in Hassockfield Secure Training Centre (STC) in County Durham on 9 August 2004 whilst on remand.

Adam's case reignites concerns over the treatment of children by the criminal justice system. His case has attracted substantial parliamentary and public disquiet and led for calls for a radical overhaul of the way the state treats child offenders.

The inquest into Adam's death will scrutinise:

- his placement in a secure training centre over 150 miles from his family;
- implementation of suicide prevention policies in Hassockfield and what action what action was taken to protect Adam given his age and known vulnerability to self harm;
- the use of restraint on Adam and its impact on his mental state;
- the monitoring of the use of restraint in Hassockfield;
- staff training in working with vulnerable children;
- the quality of the monitoring and inspection regime for STCs.

The inquest is scheduled to last for three weeks and will begin by hearing from Adam's mother. Evidence will also be heard from amongst others: the officers involved in restraining Adam; senior management of the Youth Justice Board and Hassockfield; medical experts and other children held at Hassockfield.

The family will be represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members Richard Hermer from Doughty Street chambers and Mark Scott from Bhatt Murphy solicitors.

A detailed press briefing is available on INQUEST's website.

Further information	www.inquest.org.uk
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