

For immediate release 21 September 2007

SHOCKING NUMBER OF DEATHS IN CUSTODY NEEDS MORE SCRUTINY AND ANALYSIS

Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST said:

“The shocking number of deaths in custody officially collated and published centrally today for the first time in the annual report of the Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody needs more scrutiny and analysis than the Forum can provide, in particular those occurring in psychiatric detention. Everyone in custody is owed duty of care by the state. The only way to ensure lessons are learned from these deaths is through effective investigations and inquests and for follow up action on their outcomes to be taken across custodial institutions.

INQUEST is the only specialist charity working directly with families bereaved by deaths in custody. It is a member of the Forum to try and ensure that families’ voices and experiences are heard. However we are concerned about the Forum’s lack of powers and resources. It does not have the capacity to research deaths in custody, to collate and analyse jury findings and coroner’s reports or to monitor the implementation of recommendations arising from inquests or investigation reports. It cannot call to account and recommend action against those institutions and individuals who fail to take action.

INQUEST believes that what is need is a properly resourced independent overarching body with statutory powers to address the complexity and breadth of issues that arise.”

Further Information	www.inquest.org.uk
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Forum for Preventing Deaths In Custody	Forum annual report

Note to Editors

INQUEST is publishing a major report *Unlocking the Truth: Families’ Experiences of the Investigation of Deaths in Custody* by Helen Shaw and Deborah Coles on **1 October** which includes key recommendations for action. Further details to follow.

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. We have arranged for many of the families we work with to comment today on the publication of the Forum’s report.