

For immediate release 9 February 2007

INQUEST OPENS INTO DEATH OF MANDY PEARSON AT HMP NEW HALL

10.00am Monday 12 February 2007

Sitting before HM Coroner for West Yorkshire (Eastern District), David Hinchliff
Wakefield Coroner's Court, 71 Northgate, Wakefield WF1 3BS

The inquest into the death of 37 year old Mandy Pearson will begin on Monday 12 February 2007. The hearing is expected to last two weeks.

Mandy was found hanging in a dormitory cell in the Health Care Centre at HMP New Hall on 11 October 2004. She was serving a five month prison sentence at the time of her death and was one of three women who took their own life at HMP New Hall between April and October 2004. Like many of the women at New Hall, Mandy had a long history of self harm and mental health difficulties.

Mandy's family has a number of areas of concern which they hope the inquest will examine, including:

- Why, despite persistent and regular threats of suicide and self harm, Mandy was never placed on the suicide/self harm monitoring procedure in the weeks before her death;
- whether prison was the appropriate place for a young vulnerable woman with severe mental health difficulties.

During the course the inquest the Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, is due to give evidence to the Coroner. She inspected HMP New Hall in November 2003. In her introductory remark to the 2003 report the Chief Inspector stated "New Hall is holding women and girls who should not be there". She also stated "There is an urgent need to provide alternative therapeutic environments where appropriate treatment and support can be offered".

Cynthia Keast, Mandy's mother, commented:

"It is two and a half years since my daughter died. It has been a very long wait for the inquest into her death. I have many questions about what happened to Mandy and I am hoping to get some answers at the inquest":

The family is being represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members Fiona Borrill of Lester Morrill Solicitors, Leeds and barrister Leslie Thomas of Garden Court Chambers.

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| Further Information | www.inquest.org.uk |
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Notes to Editors

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.

Self inflicted deaths at HMP New Hall 1994-date

| Name | Date Of Death | Age | Status | Mode |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|----------------|
| Kelly Hutchinson | 01/05/2006 | 22 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Victoria Robinson | 02/02/2005 | 26 | Remanded | Hanging |
| Mandy Pearson | 12/10/2004 | 27 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Marie Walsh | 29/07/2004 | 29 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Louise Davies | 18/04/2004 | 32 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Petra Blanksby | 24/11/2003 | 19 | Remanded | Hanging |
| Jessica Adam | 21/06/2003 | 22 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Helena Price | 14/02/2003 | 27 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Jacqueline McPartline | 18/08/2002 | 32 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Miranda Cox | 26/01/2002 | 41 | Remanded | Hanging |
| Victoria Winterburn | 04/01/2002 | 21 | Remanded | Hanging |
| Sheena Creamer | 07/08/2000 | 22 | Remanded | Hanging |
| Teresa Lohinski | 07/03/1999 | 22 | Convicted | Hanging |
| Michelle Wilcox | 30/05/1998 | 32 | Convicted | Septicaemia |
| Michelle Pearson | 05/07/1994 | 23 | Convicted | Hanging |

Source: INQUEST monitoring