

For immediate release 3 September 2007

INQUEST WELCOMES REPORT INTO DEATH OF ADAM RICKWOOD

INQUEST welcomes the report of the Serious Case Review Panel to the Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board (3 September 2007) about the death of Adam Rickwood and its recognition that ‘the “whole system” treated Adam Rickwood as a child in need of custody rather than a child in need of care’.

Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST said:

“The recommendations of this report add further support to the call for a public inquiry into the treatment of children in the youth justice system. The government’s abiding lack of will to engage with the real lessons to emerge from the tragic deaths of two children in Secure Training Centres (STCs) is reflected in its unjustified and undemocratic amending of the Secure Training Centre Rules,¹ without debate or public consultation, a move which broadened the circumstances in which children in the care of the state can be forcibly restrained.

Following the conclusion of inquests into the restraint related deaths of children in custody INQUEST wrote to the Secretary of State for Justice the Rt Hon Jack Straw MP on 20 July 2007 reiterating our view that the most effective way of responding to these avoidable deaths and ensure that the necessary learning and action takes place is through the establishment of a wider holistic inquiry in public of the juvenile justice system with the proper involvement of families, children and those working within it. Proper, transparent and critical analysis of the treatment of children in custody – in particular the inappropriate use of custody and the use of painful and dangerous restraint techniques - is now essential.

To date we have received no reply to our letter and the only action taken by government is an announcement of its intention to review “restraint issues”. Will the recommendations of this report vanish into the ether like those of previous inquiries that have alerted government to systemic failings within the youth justice system”.

Further information including press releases and briefings on the case of Adam Rickwood and child restraint	www.inquest.org.uk
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Notes to Editors

¹ Statutory Instrument 2007 No 1709 - changes to the Secure Training Centre Rules 1998 which came into effect on 6 July 2007.

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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.