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DAMNING CRITICAL VERDICT RETURNED AT INQUEST INTO MURDER OF SHAHID AZIZ IN HMP LEEDS

The inquest into the death of Shahid Aziz, killed by his cellmate in April 2004 while sharing a cell at HMP Leeds, has returned an unlawful killing verdict and a critical narrative finding failures in the Prison Service partly responsible for contributing to Shahid's death.

The inquest jury stated that "*the failings in the Cell Sharing Risk Assessment system at Her Majesty's Prison, Leeds contributed to Shahid Aziz's death*". It listed the system as having the following problems:

- Inadequate training of Reception & Healthcare staff.
- Lack of resources.
- No access to Police National Computer for Reception staff after 5pm.
- Reception staff not having Police National Computer access in Reception area.
- Poor continuous review process of Cell Sharing Risk Assessment.
- No process to follow up missing documentation.
- No timeframes for following up documentation.
- Poor communication between departments and external agencies.
- No accountability or ownership of Cell Sharing Risk Assessment cycle.
- Too reliant on information from prisoners.
- Not linking previous offences to current offence.
- Inadequate dissemination of Governors order 1 October 2002 and Prison Service Instruction 26/2002 to all staff.
- Failure to distribute Cell Sharing Risk Assessment handbooks to Reception staff and Healthcare staff.

The jury also stated that Peter McCann's previous convictions should have been obtained prior to him being placed in the cell with Shahid Aziz and found that the length of time it took for HMP Leeds to contact Shahid Aziz's family to inform them of the death was unacceptable.

Parveen Mahmood (the widow of Shahid Aziz) was represented at the inquest by barrister Leslie Thomas of Garden Court Chambers, instructed by Daniel Machover of Hickman and Rose solicitors. Both are members of the INQUEST Lawyers Group.

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Notes to Editors

A full copy of the narrative verdict is available from inquest@inquest.org.uk.