

For Immediate Release 5 FEBRUARY 2007

INQUEST INTO DEATH OF 16 YEAR OLD FOUND HANGED IN LANCASTER FARMS YOI EXPECTED TO CONCLUDE THIS WEEK

Before HM Coroner for Preston, North and South West Lancashire District, Dr James Adeley, sitting at Lancaster Shire Hall, Castle Parade, Lancaster, LA1 1YJ

The jury are expected to retire to consider their verdict following the conclusion of the coroner's summing up on Thursday 7 February at the inquest into the death of 16 year old Gareth Price in Lancaster Farms YOI.

Gareth was found hanging in his cell at Lancaster Farms Young Offender Institution on 19 January 2005.

Gareth was the 28th child to die in state custody since 1990 and his death raises serious concerns over the ability of the criminal justice system to care for vulnerable children in prison. The need for lessons to be learnt from Gareth's death has been highlighted by the tragic death of another child at Lancaster Farms, 15 year old Liam McManus, who hanged himself there on 29 November 2007.

Throughout the extensive three month inquest a catalogue of concerns has emerged in the evidence pointing to failures and inadequacies throughout the youth offending and prison services in relation to Gareth's care.

The issues the jury will consider include:

- The failure by Youth Offending Team to hold a remand planning meeting and thereafter monthly meetings in respect of Gareth, in breach of national standards.
- The issue of the shortage of staff working within the Youth Offending Team and the impact that this may have had.
- The impact of the decision not to follow National Standards by the Youth Offending Team.
- The failure to bring to the attention of prison staff a psychiatrist's report which clearly identified Gareth as a suicide risk.
- The failure to inform Gareth's parents of his attempts to self-harm in prison.
- Whether Gareth's death was preventable.

INQUEST will make a statement when the jury return their verdict.

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Notes to editors:

1. 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.
2. Gareth's family is represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members Joanne Kearsley of Farleys Solicitors and barrister Colin Hutchinson of Garden Court Chambers.
3. The coroner will be giving 24 hours notice as to when the jury will return their verdict. INQUEST will release a further press release at this time.

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