

PRESS RELEASE

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JURY CONDEMNS THE USE OF EXCESSIVE RESTRAINT IN THE DEATH OF KURT HOWARD

The jury at the inquest into the death of Kurt Howard returned a narrative verdict which described the prolonged use of face-down prone restraint on him as "excessive."

32 year old Kurt Howard died on 29 June 2002 at Cefn Coed hospital in Swansea whilst sectioned under the mental health act. The inquest lasted nearly five weeks and was held before HM Coroner Philip Rogers sitting at County Hall in Swansea.

During the inquest the jury heard evidence which raised serious concerns about the treatment and care Kurt received. In a seven page narrative verdict the jury catalogued a series of failings in staffing, training and facilities.

Deborah Coles, Co-director of INQUEST said:

"Evidence heard at this inquest is a damning indictment of the treatment of a vulnerable mentally ill young man who died a horrific death while being restrained. The scandal is that six years after Kurt's death there is still no mandatory training on the use of restraint in psychiatric hospitals as recommended by the Rocky Bennett Inquiry in 2003. Excessive levels of restraint continue to be used in psychiatric institutions behind closed doors. The government must enforce national guidelines and implement compulsory training on restraint before further vulnerable patients die."

Kurt Howard's family was represented at the inquest by barrister Leslie Thomas of Garden Court Chambers, instructed by Joanne Kearsley of Farleys Solicitors. Both are members of the INQUEST Lawyers Group.

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 and conducts policy work on the issues arising.

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