

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release 11 September 2009

INQUEST OPENS INTO DEATH OF 15 YEAR OLD BOY FOUND HANGING AT HMYOI LANCASTER FARMS

10.00am Tuesday 15 September 2009

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 inquest into the death of 15 year old Liam McManus opens on 15 September 2009. It is expected to last for seven weeks. Liam was a troubled child who had experienced a significant amount of loss and trauma in his short life.

Liam was found hanging from a bed sheet tied to the window bars in a single cell on normal location in HMYOI Lancaster Farms on 29 November 2007. He had been recalled to custody for breaching the terms of his licence and was to serve the remaining 1 month and 14 days of his Detention and Training Order in prison.

Liam was the thirtieth child and the fifth 15 year old to die in state custody since 1990. At the time of Liam's death, the inquest into the death of 16 year old Gareth Price - who also hanged himself at Lancaster Farms - was taking place; that inquest raised significant concerns about the treatment and care of vulnerable children in prisons.

Liam's family hope that the inquest will answer a number of serious concerns about Liam's death, including:

- The decision to recall Liam to custody;
- the decision to place Liam in a Youth Offender Institution rather than a Secure Children's Home or Secure Training Centre, given his age and known vulnerability;
- whether Liam's risk of self harm was properly assessed and managed in Lancaster Farms;
- the safety of the accommodation at Lancaster Farms;
- the regime at Lancaster Farms, in particular the opportunities he had to engage in meaningful activity and with outside agencies;
- whether Liam was given proper emergency care when he was found by prison staff; and
- what role, if any, bullying by other inmates played in his death.

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Deborah Coles, Co-Director of INQUEST, said:

The death of a child while in the 'care' of the state is an important matter of public concern and it is vital that this death is properly scrutinised. This is a tragic case which highlights our concerns about the use of imprisonment for vulnerable children.

Liam's family is represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members Mark Scott of Bhatt Murphy Solicitors and barrister Colin Hutchinson of Garden Court Chambers.

Notes to editors:

INQUEST is the only organisation in England and Wales that provides a specialist, comprehensive advice service on contentious deaths and their investigation to bereaved people, lawyers, other advice and support agencies, the media, parliamentarians and the wider public. Its casework priorities are deaths in prison and in police custody, in immigration detention and in secure training centres. INQUEST develops policy proposals and undertakes research to campaign for changes to the inquest and investigation process, reduce the number of custodial deaths, and improve the treatment and care of those within the institutions where the deaths occur.

INQUEST is campaigning to ensure that the Coroners and Justice Bill 2009 results in fundamental reform of an inquest system currently hampered by delay, inconsistency of approach and lack of resources and unable to fulfil its vital function of preventing unnecessary deaths.

The government must also make changes to ensure that bereaved families can participate effectively in inquest hearings by having equal access, alongside the police and Prison Service, to non means-tested public funding for their legal representation. [INQUEST's briefing on the Coroners & Justice Bill](#)

Further Information	www.inquest.org.uk
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