

## PRESS RELEASE

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### INQUEST INTO DEATH OF EXTREMELY VULNERABLE WOMAN AT MIDDLESBROUGH POLICE STATION

10am Monday 19 October 2009

Before HM Coroner for Teesside, Michael Sheffield

Sitting at Coroners Court, Corporation Road, Middlesbrough TS1 2DA

The inquest into the death of 61 year old Moyra Stockill opens on Monday 19 October and is expected to last for up to six weeks. Mrs Stockill was found dead in a cell at Middlesbrough police station on 10 December 2003 just hours after being conveyed from St Luke's psychiatric hospital, where she had been detained under section 3 of the Mental Health Act.

As part of her illness, Mrs Stockill would frequently self-harm by placing objects in her mouth. She would then alert nursing staff by pointing at her throat so that the objects would be removed. On the morning of 10 December 2003 Mrs Stockill had self-harmed on nine separate occasions, eight of which involved putting objects in her mouth. Following an alleged violent incident later that morning, the police were called. Before the police arrived a male staff member impersonated a police officer in an attempt to calm her down. Following her arrest and transfer to the police station, Mrs Stockill was placed in a cell and was later seen banging on the cell door and pointing at her throat. Custody officers did not respond and she was found dead a short time later having choked.

Mrs Stockill's daughter, Clare Barker, who has waited six years for her mother's inquest to take place, hopes that this inquest will examine her serious concerns, including:

- Whether Mrs Stockill should ever have been removed from the hospital premises without the authorisation of her consultant, as required under s.3 MHA.
- What effect the police impersonation might have had on Mrs Stockill.
- What information about the risks Mrs Stockill posed to herself was passed to the police and was that information sufficient.
- Whether Mrs Stockill's care and observations at the police station were adequate.
- Why custody staff did not respond to Mrs Stockill's banging on the cell and gesturing.

Mrs Stockill's daughter, Clare, said:

*After six long years I hope that we at last find out the truth and that the outcome of the inquest has a real effect on psychiatric and custodial care in the future.*

Moyra Stockill's family is represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group member solicitor Ruth Bunday of Harrison Bunday Solicitors, Leeds.

## 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	<a href="http://www.inquest.org.uk">www.inquest.org.uk</a>
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