

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release Friday 5 June

INQUEST OPENS INTO DEATH OF BLACK PRISONER PETER KIRKWOOD AT HMP CHELMSFORD

12.45am Monday 8 June

Before HM Coroner Mrs Caroline Beasley-Murray
Sitting at County Hall, Duke St, Chelmsford, Essex

The inquest into the death of 28 year old Peter Kirkwood at HMP Chelmsford opens on Monday 8 June and is expected to last for three weeks. Peter was found hanging on his first night in custody at HMP Chelmsford on 14 October 2006. He had a history of self-harm and mental health problems and had been subject to an open F2052SH form (suicide and self harm monitoring procedure) during a previous period at HMP Chelmsford.

Peter's death was the first in a series of eight deaths by hanging at Chelmsford prison in a two year period.

Deborah Coles, Co-director of INQUEST said:

Peter's death and the series of self-inflicted deaths that have followed at Chelmsford prison are extremely worrying. There must be robust investigations into these deaths so that any systemic failings, including the impact of overcrowding, are properly examined.

Peter Kirkwood's family is represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members barrister Colin Hutchinson of Garden Court Chambers, instructed by Dan Rubinstein of Hodge Jones and Allen solicitors.

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](#)

Self-inflicted deaths in HMP/YOI Chelmsford 2006-date							
Name	Classification	DateOfDeath	Ethnicity	Age	Remanded?	Cause	Verdict
Billy Coulson	Self-Inflicted	20/09/2008	UK White	18	Remanded	Hanging	Awaited
Lee Rawlinson	Self-Inflicted	04/03/2008	UK White	32	Remanded	Hanging	Awaited
Vinith Kannathasan	Self-Inflicted	12/02/2008	Asian	18	Remanded	Hanging	Awaited
James Sullivan	Self-Inflicted	09/01/2008	UK White	23	Convicted	Hanging	Awaited
Joker Idris	Self-Inflicted	25/12/2007	Black African	18	Convicted	Hanging	Awaited
Simon Gregory	Self-Inflicted	27/11/2007	UK White	36	Remanded	Hanging	Awaited
Stewart Kight	Self-Inflicted	04/05/2007	UK White	38	Convicted	Hanging	Awaited
Peter Kirkwood	Self-Inflicted	14/10/2006	Black African	28	Remanded	Hanging	Awaited

Source: INQUEST Casework and monitoring

Further Information	www.inquest.org.uk
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