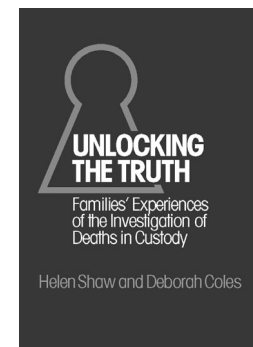


UNLOCKING THE TRUTH

Families' Experiences of the Investigation of Deaths in Custody

Helen Shaw and Deborah Coles



Unlocking the Truth describes the experiences of families bereaved by deaths in custody from the time of death to the conclusion of the investigation and inquest and situates them within the political, recent historical and legal context.

- Thoroughly researched and extensively referenced, the report:
- Describes the issues that have emerged since the early 1980s which have shaped public, family and state perceptions about deaths in custody.
 - Presents families' experiences in their own words.
 - Makes extensive recommendations and presents families' suggestions for changes in practice.
 - Demonstrates how all agencies involved following a death in custody have a crucial role to play in supporting bereaved people.

- Shows how current systems are failing through basic lack of provision and poor implementation of existing protocols.
- Argues that scrutiny, criticism and proposals for reform of the way the state deals with deaths in custody is a crucial contribution to the health of its democracy.
- Makes two key overarching recommendations that argue for extensive improvements following the conclusion of the investigation and inquest to improve accountability, learning and preventative action, and for the creation of a Standing Commission on Custodial Deaths.

Unlocking the Truth is essential reading for researchers, policy makers, penal reformers, family liaison officers from the police, Prison Service and those working for the independent investigation bodies, human rights specialists, legal professionals, coroners, voluntary sector bereavement agencies, bereavement counsellors, academics, students and all those with an interest in the mechanisms that follow contentious deaths.

Helen Shaw and **Deborah Coles** are co-directors of INQUEST, the only non governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families and friends of those who die in custody.

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