

Welcome to the first edition of the INQUEST E-NEWSLETTER. This is a print version provided for those who may not have easy access to the email edition; however, more details and links can be accessed via INQUEST's website <http://www.inquest.org.uk> where you can also sign up for the email edition.

We hope this monthly newsletter will enable us to communicate more effectively about the work we do and current issues in deaths in custody. Please forward this to anyone you think may be interested.

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- IPCC makes shocking recommendations in Menezes and Powell cases
- Government extends the use of restraint on children in custody
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- Coroners Reform Bill back in Government's draft legislative programme
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- Worrying number of self inflicted deaths in prison this year

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NEWS

- **YOUTH JUSTICE BOARD SLAMMED IN CHILD RESTRAINT INQUEST**

The inquest into the restraint-related death of 15 year old black child Gareth Myatt concluded in June 15 and made sweeping criticisms about the conduct of the Youth Justice Board. Full details of the verdict and INQUEST's response can be found [here](#). Following the inquest, His Honour Richard Pollard, the retired circuit court judge who sat as a coroner at the inquest, suggested 34 actions to be taken in his wide-ranging and detailed [rule 43 report](#). He stated it would be 'unforgivable' not to learn from Gareth's death.

On 12 July an [adjournment debate](#) on his death was held in the House of Commons by Sally Keeble MP.

- **GOVERNMENT EXTENDS THE USE OF RESTRAINT ON CHILDREN IN CUSTODY**

Earlier this year evidence was heard at the inquest into the death of 14 year old [Adam Rickwood](#) who was restrained using a 'nose distraction' technique just hours before taking his own life at Hassockfield STC in 2004. Following his inquest, the government introduced a Statutory Instrument (SI 2007, No 1709) on 13 June which extends the circumstances in which children can be forcibly restrained in Secure Training Centres (STCs). This scandalous rule change means that children can now be restrained for non-compliance, a change which INQUEST has likened to [state sanctioned child abuse](#).

Since the rule change was announced INQUEST has been campaigning vigorously to get it overturned. We produced a detailed [briefing](#) and have spoken at parliamentary meetings on the issue as well as initiating extensive media coverage and debate on the subject. We are continuing to work with other child rights and penal reform organisations and the Children's Commissioner to reverse this dangerous legislation. We urge MPs to register their objection to the statutory instrument by signing [EDM 1727](#) and [EDM 1714](#) which call for its reversal.

The government recently announced it will be undertaking a joint review of the use of restraint in STCs, Young Offender Institutions and Local Authority Secure Children's Homes. INQUEST is concerned about the lack on consultation thus far on any such review and is reiterating our call for a wider public inquiry into the treatment of children in custody.

- **IPCC MAKES SHOCKING DECISIONS IN MENEZES AND POWELL CASES**

The IPCC made two scandalous decisions regarding disciplinary action for police officers in the high profile cases of the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes at Stockwell tube station in 2005 and the death of Mikey Powell in police custody in Birmingham in 2003. In both cases the IPCC failed to recommended disciplinary action against officers involved. INQUEST believes these decisions to be entirely premature given that there has not been any public scrutiny of either case. INQUEST's letter to the press on this issue can be found [here](#).

The Mikey Powell Campaign will be holding an all day event at the Custard Factory in Birmingham on 7 September to mark the fourth anniversary of his death. Further details can be found at www.mikeypowell-campaign.org.uk

- **DAMNING CRITICAL VERDICT RETURNED AT INQUEST INTO MURDER OF SHAHID AZIZ IN HMP LEEDS**

On 21 May the inquest into the death of Shahid Aziz, killed by his cellmate in April 2004 while sharing a cell at HMP Leeds, returned an unlawful killing verdict and a critical narrative finding failures in the Prison Service partly responsible for contributing to Shahid's death. The inquest jury stated that "*the failings in the Cell Sharing Risk Assessment system at Her Majesty's Prison Leeds contributed to Shahid Aziz's death*". The jury listed over [ten specific systemic shortcomings](#) at the jail. This inquest once again shed light on the violence and brutality of prison life and the serious management failings reminiscent to those exposed following the murder of Zahid Mubarek at Feltham Young Offender Institute in March 2000.

- **CAMPAIGNERS WIN INCLUSION OF DEATHS IN CUSTODY IN CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER ACT 2007**

The last few months have seen some of the most extensive discussion of custodial deaths in parliament during passionate debates surrounding the inclusion of deaths in custody in the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Bill. After a series of lengthy battles and five defeats for the government in the House of Lords the government finally agreed to include deaths in custody in the remit of the Bill, albeit with a three year delay in its implementation.

INQUEST has long supported reform in the area of corporate accountability and has worked closely with the [Centre for Corporate Accountability](#) and with families whose relatives have died in disasters and at work. A copy of our latest briefing on the issue is available [here](#).

- **CORONERS REFORM BILL INCLUDED IN DRAFT LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME**

INQUEST is heartened to see the Coroners Reform Bill included in the government's draft legislative programme published on 11 July. Members of the public have an opportunity to comment on the proposals in the draft programme and we urge supporters to tell the government how vital it is to include the Bill in the next parliamentary session. To see the draft programme and how to comment on it visit [here](#).

INQUEST recently joined the Ministry of Justice's Coroner Stakeholder Forum which allows us to ensure the views of bereaved families are heard during the process of reform.

- **REVIEW OF FORUM FOR PREVENTING DEATHS IN CUSTODY**

During parliamentary debates on the inclusion of custodial deaths in the Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Bill 2006/7 the government announced that it intends to review the operation of the Forum for Preventing Deaths in Custody. The Forum was set up as part of the government's response to the December 2004 report into deaths in custody from the parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR). It brings together fourteen organisations from government, the police, healthcare and prisons alongside coroners and INQUEST.

INQUEST is a member of the Forum but is highly critical of its lack of resources and powers and its inadequate family representation. In July we spoke at a parliamentary meeting in the House of Lords on the limitations of the Forum and are continuing to campaign for a Standing Commission on Custodial Deaths which we believe presents a more appropriate response to the complex issues arising from deaths in custody.

STATISTICS

- **WOMEN'S DEATHS IN PRISON DOUBLE LAST YEAR'S FIGURES**

The numbers of self inflicted deaths of women prisoners has already doubled last year's figure even though we are only half way through the year. In 2006, there were three SI deaths of women in prison while at the time of publication the number to die in 2007 was six, all of which were self-inflicted.

- **WORRYING NUMBER OF SELF INFLICTED DEATHS IN PRISON THIS YEAR**

INQUEST's casework and monitoring service has highlighted a worrying number of self inflicted deaths in prison so far this year:

All Deaths in Prison

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Number</i>
Self-Inflicted	52
Non-Self-Inflicted	52
Homicide	2
Awaiting Classification	5

Our concerns have been echoed by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Anne Owers, who recently linked the number of self inflicted deaths in prison [to prison overcrowding](#).

ABOUT INQUEST

- **PCS AFFILIATE TO INQUEST**

The Public and Commercial Services Union recently [affiliated to INQUEST](#) at its annual conference. The PCS is one of the UK's largest trade unions with nearly 325,000 members. The union has been supporting INQUEST's call for reform of the inquest system. Earlier this year INQUEST spoke at a PCS parliamentary briefing on the [Justice4Jay](#) campaign and has been advising the Jay's family on inquest proceedings. We encourage any supporters who are members of trade unions to ask their branches to affiliate to INQUEST to help us continue our vital work.

- **INQUEST IN THE NEWS**

INQUEST has generated extensive debate in the national press about our child deaths in custody campaign in the last few months. To get a flavour of the coverage and read some of the comment and news pieces on this issue visit the [INQUEST in the news](#) section of our website.

- **GILLY MUNDY MEMORIAL FUND**

INQUEST's beloved senior caseworker Gilly Mundy died suddenly in March after collapsing in the office and suffering a severe stroke. We at INQUEST, his wife, family and friends are devastated. Gilly was as generous in death as in life and his organs were donated to enable others to live. A fund has been set up in his memory to be used towards supporting families who have experienced a death of a loved one in custody. Donations can be made care of the INQUEST office, with cheques made payable to the Gilly Mundy Memorial Fund.

INQUEST will be hosting an event to mark Gilly's nine years with us in September 2007.

- **SUPPORT US**

2007 marks 25 years of INQUEST's work for truth, justice and accountability and we need your support to carry on that work. Money helps us to provide our unique casework service to families. You can donate to us via our [website](#) or [contact us](#) to join our supporters network.

