

Welcome to the December issue 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.

Please forward this to anyone you think may be interested. For more information on any of the issues contained in this newsletter please contact: inquest@inquest.org.uk

INQUEST would like to thank everyone who has supported us through 2007, and to wish you all a peaceful New Year.

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NEWS

- **INQUEST wins Human Rights Award 2007**

The [Liberty and JUSTICE Human Rights Awards](#) are held every year in December to commemorate International Human Rights Day.



The ceremony aims to recognise individuals and organisations whose work is dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of the others. INQUEST won the 2007 award jointly alongside [Kids Company](#). The judges commended our “high-quality specialist casework” and our “commitment to providing incontrovertible evidence of the serious human rights abuses of children in custody”. In accepting the award INQUEST’s co-directors paid tribute to the staff team, the courage of bereaved families and the work of members of the INQUEST Lawyers Group.

- **Death of 15 year old Liam McManus at HMYOI Lancaster Farms**

On 29 November, 15 year old Liam McManus was found hanging in his cell at Lancaster Farms Young Offender Institution. He was three weeks into a six week sentence for a breach of licence. Liam is the 30th child to die in penal custody since 1990 and the fifth 15 year old to die. INQUEST is in contact with Liam’s family and has [raised concerns](#) about his death. INQUEST is also currently supporting the family of another child, Gareth Price, who was 16 when he was found hanging at Lancaster Farms in 2005. The [inquest into Gareth’s death](#) is ongoing and expected to finish in January 2008.

- **Linton Kwesi Johnson records BBC Appeal for INQUEST**

On 5 December [Linton Kwesi Johnson](#), widely known and revered as the world’s first reggae poet, recorded a [BBC Radio 4 Appeal](#) on behalf of INQUEST. The Appeal will be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Sunday 3 February 2008 at 7.55am and 9.26pm and on Thursday 7 February at 3.27pm. Please put the date in your diary and encourage all your contacts to listen. As a small charity your support is always needed to enable us to continue our work. Please visit our [website](#) to make a donation or better still, set up a standing order.



CASES

- **Jury condemns Prison Service at Louise Giles inquest**
The jury at the inquest into the death of 20 year old Louise Giles in HMP Durham in 2005 returned a [highly critical narrative verdict](#) condemning the Prison Service for a catalogue of failings. INQUEST believes these failings amount to a clear case of corporate manslaughter for which the Prison Service should be brought to account. Press coverage of Louise's case can be found [here](#).
- **Jury criticise prison healthcare at Martin Green inquest**
The jury at the inquest into the death of 25 year old Martin Green in HMP Blakenhurst on 15 July 2002 returned a [highly critical narrative verdict](#) finding that the medical care given to Martin was inadequate and serious failures in his treatment contributed to his death. The Ministry of Justice expressed its "[deep regret](#)" over Martin's death.
- **Crown Prosecution Service announce no prosecutions in death of Paul Coker**
The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) yet again came to a decision not to prosecute any police officers over the death of 32 year old Paul Coker in Plumstead police station in 2005. Paul was subject to the use of force by police officers. Paul's family have [expressed their 'betrayal'](#) over the CPS's decision. INQUEST has ongoing concerns about the reluctance of statutory agencies to press criminal charges over deaths in custody and continue to flag this up in our campaigning work.
- **Inquest into death of Sean Beard raises concerns over police training**
Following the inquest into the death of Sean Beard in Burton on Trent police station on 2005, the coroner has used his powers under rule 43 of the Coroners Rules 1984 to recommend clearer guidance over police first aid training, particularly over practices employed when faced with a person choking. Press coverage of the case can be found [here](#).

POLICY

- **Government to change law on admissibility of secret evidence at inquests**
The Ministry of Justice has agreed to change [the law on the admission of sensitive evidence](#) following a legal challenge on behalf of the family of [Azelle Rodney](#), who was shot dead by the police in 2005. The law change will allow the use of intelligence and surveillance information at inquests, currently prohibited under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. As the government has not set a timetable for making the rule change, Azelle's family are encouraging individuals and organisations to write to the Home Secretary, the Justice Secretary and

their local MPs asking for the change to be implemented soon as possible. A model letter to your own MP can here found [here](#) while another letter [here](#) can be sent to the Home Secretary and/or Justice Secretary. You can also email your MP at www.writetothem.com. Do let INQUEST know of any correspondence you receive in reply.

- **Coroners Bill dropped from Queen's Speech**

The Coroners Bill was dropped from the Queen's Speech at the last minute for the second year in a row. INQUEST had been working with the Ministry of Justice's Coroners Stakeholder Forum on delivering a reformed service and is bitterly disappointed the government has [let down bereaved families](#) in this way. INQUEST immediately briefed parliamentarians in both Houses on our concerns, and the issue was raised in the debate on the Queen's Speech in the Lords. We also met the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State responsible for coroners, Bridget Prentice MP, to express our disappointment and called for interim measures to be put in place to deal with the crisis in the inquest system. Members of the [INQUEST Lawyers Group](#) have since written to the Minister to express their concerns and are currently awaiting a response.
- **Government response to Corston report published**

The government published its long-awaited [response](#) to the [Corston report](#) for vulnerable women in the criminal justice system last week. Whilst the government has stated that 39 of Baroness Corston's 43 recommendations had been fully or partially met, this appears somewhat disingenuous given that no new money is being allocated to the implementation of the recommendations and only further reviews have now been commissioned as opposed to concrete action. Shamefully, the government firmly rejected the report's call for non means tested public funding for bereaved families at inquests into deaths in custody. INQUEST will be taking this issue up in the New Year.
- **Child deaths campaign gathers momentum**

INQUEST has been busy lobbying and briefing MPs on the use of restraint on children in custody. We demanded and got a meeting for the families of Gareth Myatt and Adam Rickwood with Rt Hon Jack Straw MP, the Secretary of State for Justice. INQUEST accompanied them to this meeting where we called for a public inquiry into child deaths in custody. We have also continued to raise the issue across the sector, attending [Nacro](#) and [Centre for Crime and Justice Studies](#) events, and working closely with, amongst others, the Office of the [Children's Commissioner](#). INQUEST submitted a detailed response to the government's [Restraint Review](#) and alongside the family of Adam Rickwood, met the Review chairs in November. In early December we supported the [Judicial Review](#) brought on behalf of child AC against the

government's introduction of a statutory instrument extending the use of restraint in secure training centres. A judgment is expected on this before the end of the year.

STATISTICS

Numbers of self-inflicted deaths in prison in England & Wales continued to rise well above the total for 2006.

- **Deaths in prison 2007**

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Number</i>
Self-Inflicted	83
Non-Self-Inflicted	85
Homicide	2
Awaiting Classification	4

- **Deaths in police custody 2007**

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Custody deaths	24
Pursuits	9
Road Traffic Accidents	8
Shootings	4

Source: INQUEST casework and monitoring
Further statistical information can be found [here](#)

ABOUT INQUEST

- **Staff changes**
Sian Griffiths joined INQUEST as the new Casework Service Manager at the beginning of December. Sian trained as a social worker and has spent more than 20 years working both in the Probation Service and more recently with the Children and Family Court Advisory Service. Sian was an elected Vice Chair of [Napo](#) (the trade union and professional association for Family Court and probation staff) and brings with her a range of political and campaigning experience.
- **INQUEST website to be part of the UK digital archive**
INQUEST's website has been selected for inclusion in the British Library's programme of web preservation as part of the [UK Web Archiving Consortium](#). The Library selects sites to represent aspects of UK documentary heritage so that they will remain available to researchers in the future.

- **Re-launch of *Inquest Law* magazine**



We have re-launched *Inquest Law* magazine – if you are not already a subscriber, find out how to subscribe [here](#).

The magazine is published three times a year by INQUEST. It is the only publicly available journal that provides regular case notes and reports on inquests following contentious deaths. The most recent issue includes an interview with Lord Ramsbotham, former HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, and Louise Christian discusses the issues raised by a series of fatal incidents on the railways, while Stephen Simblet reports on recent developments in inquest law. The journal also contains an extensive case notes section.

- **Bungee Jump for INQUEST**

Finally INQUEST would like to warmly thank and congratulate Carla Thompson who did a bungee jump for INQUEST, raising over £300. Carla's brother Jason died in HMP Swansea on 1 November 2004 and INQUEST has been supporting his family. We greatly appreciate Carla's efforts and send her our utmost thanks.