

Welcome to the summer 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 www.inquest.org.uk where you can also sign up for the email edition.

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NEWS

- **New rules come into force on coroner reports to prevent future deaths**
On 17 July new rules came into force to improve coroners' reports to prevent future deaths. [The Coroners \(Amendment\) Rules 2008](#) give coroners a wider remit to make reports to prevent future deaths and impose a duty on relevant persons or organisations to respond to the report (albeit not a duty to have to actually *act* on coroners' recommendations). As part of the changes, the Ministry of Justice has indicated it will be disseminating summaries of rule 43 reports and their responses on a regular basis. [New guidance for coroners](#) has also been issued on how to use the new rules. INQUEST welcomes these interim

changes, and will be monitoring their effects and continuing to campaign for new legislation to reform the whole inquest system.

- **IPCC launches public consultation on review of its services**
The Independent Police Complaints Commission has launched a consultation on its working practices after its initial four years of operation. The consultation invites comments on “what works well and what does not work so well in the current system” and on ten proposals on how to reform the current system, primarily concerned with changing the way lower level complaints are dealt with. INQUEST has ongoing dialogue with the IPCC where we raise issues arising from our casework and we urge individuals and organisations to contribute to the consultation.
- **Parliamentarians condemn government plans for ‘secret’ inquests**
INQUEST has continued its intense lobbying of parliamentarians over Part 6 of the Counter Terrorism Bill concerning inquests. Having met the minister Tony McNulty and briefed numerous MPs and Lords we were heartened by the passionate debates that took place in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords concerning the government’s proposals on secret inquests. During the debates cross bench parliamentarians, including the Conservative and Liberal Democrat front benches, rallied behind INQUEST’s position that the measures contained in the Bill were ill thought-out and unnecessary. When the issue was voted on in the House of Commons the government held a majority of only 23 (this compares with their majority of 9 over the 42 day detention proposals). The measures will be revisited in October after the parliamentary recess when it will go through its committee stage in the House of Lords.

CASES

- **Private prisons under scrutiny after damning verdict at Wayne Reid inquest**
An inquest jury has found that the privately-run Rye Hill Prison was ‘unsafe and unstable’ for staff and prisoners. The jury made their findings at the end of the two week inquest into the killing of 44 year old Wayne Reid who was stabbed to death in the prison in 2005. Two prisoners have since been convicted of his murder. The jury gave a detailed narrative verdict which found that prison authorities should have known that Wayne was at risk of harm from other prisoners; that the prison did not do all that could reasonably have been expected of them to prevent that harm; and that the environment at Rye Hill contributed to Wayne’s death. During the inquest shocking evidence emerged about a penalty point system in place at the prison for finding banned items which acted as disincentive for management to search

properly. Prisons Minister David Hanson has admitted Wayne's death was 'possibly avoidable'.

- **Jury condemns excessive restraint which caused death of Kurt Howard**
The jury at the inquest into the death of 32 year old Kurt Howard returned a detailed verdict which found that he died as a result of excessive restraint. Kurt died in Cefn Coed hospital in Swansea whilst sectioned under the Mental Health Act in 2002 and his family have had to wait six years for the inquest into his death to take place. During the five week inquest evidence was heard which raised serious concerns about the treatment and care Kurt received whilst in hospital. In a seven page narrative verdict the jury catalogued a series of failings in staffing, training and facilities. INQUEST has ongoing concerns about the excessive levels of restraint in psychiatric institutions. It is deeply worrying that six years after Kurt's death there is still no mandatory training on the use of restraint in psychiatric hospitals as recommended by the Rocky Bennett Inquiry in 2003.
- **44 police officers granted anonymity in Jean Charles de Menezes inquest**
44 applications by police officers for anonymity when giving evidence at the inquest into the death of Jean Charles de Menezes have been approved. The move, which was opposed by several media organisations who gave detailed written and oral submissions to the coroner, will allow the officers to give evidence under pseudonyms and behind screens. INQUEST shares the concerns of campaigners for the family who are calling for such blanket anonymity to be lifted on the basis that it hinders public scrutiny of officials and could affect the quality of the evidence provided.

POLICY

- **INQUEST makes presentation to parliamentary All Party Group on Penal Affairs**
INQUEST raised concerns about issues arising from our casework at the annual general meeting of the parliamentary All Party Group on Penal Affairs in July. We spoke about the problems with the investigation of deaths in custody and the inquest system, Black and Minority Ethnic deaths, funding issues, and child deaths in custody. Two of the families INQUEST work with also spoke at the meeting and gave powerful testimonies regarding their experiences. MPs and peers were particularly moved by the family's difficulties in obtaining non means-tested funding for their legal representation at inquests and vowed to take up the issue with parliamentary colleagues.

- **Review of restraint in Secure Training Centres delayed**
The publication of the review of the use of restraint in Secure Training Centres that arose following the inquests into the deaths of Gareth Myatt and Adam Rickwood has been delayed. The review will be published at the same time that the government will issue its response to it, preventing any opportunity for debate and consultation on the review's findings. INQUEST has been meeting parliamentarians over the continuing delays by the government on this issue as part of a joint campaign with the NSPCC and CRAE. We find the delays particularly disturbing in light of the publication of the most recent Safeguarding Children report (a joint review by eight government inspectorate agencies) in July which recorded that children in Secure Training Centres are still being subjected to adult restraints and that these are not being monitored. In June INQUEST attended a meeting organised by CRAE with Professor Lucy Smith from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child where we raised our concerns about the treatment of children in custody and the need for an inquiry into child deaths.
- **Latest coroners statistical bulletin published**
The latest national statistics on deaths reported to coroners released by the Ministry of Justice were published in May for the year 2007. This bulletin presents statistics of coroners' work including reported deaths, post-mortems, and inquests.
- **Government shelves key proposal in Corston Report**
The key proposal from the Corston review of vulnerable women in the justice system which recommended closing all thirteen women's jails in England and Wales and replacing them with small house units holding up to 20 offenders has been rejected by the government. INQUEST will be revisiting another recommendation that the government also rejected in the autumn. This supported the provision of non means-tested public funding for families' legal representation at inquests into deaths in prison.

STATISTICS

- **Deaths in custody in England & Wales so far this year**

Deaths in prison as of 21 July

<i>Classification</i>	<i>Number</i>
Self-Inflicted	33
Non-Self-Inflicted	52
Awaiting Classification	6

Deaths in police custody as of 21 July

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Custody deaths	15
Pursuits	8
Road Traffic Accidents	3
Shootings	1

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

ABOUT INQUEST

- **Chickenshed Event success**

The benefit performance of *As the Mother of a Brown Boy...* in June at Toynbee Studios in London was a huge success with over 50 family members that INQUEST works with joining a sell out audience to watch a moving and inspiring performance. After the show a panel discussion heard moving testimonies from bereaved families about their experiences. INQUEST is in discussion with Chickenshed about future performances of the show around the country and urges our supporters to try and see the performance next time it tours.



- **Spring Appeal thank you**



Finally, a really big thank you those of you who have responded so tremendously to our Spring Appeal. Your subscription renewals and donations have helped to ease our immediate financial concerns. We still have a way to go yet and the funding crunch is getting even more competitive so if you have not yet responded please go ahead and help us maintain our vital service.

For further information about any of the issues contained in this newsletter please contact yasminkhan@inquest.org.uk