

PR 25

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## For Immediate Release

### Why are children dying in custody?

On 2 November INQUEST and Nacro are holding a Parliamentary Briefing on the public inquiry call into the death of 16-year-old Joseph Scholes, who died in Stoke Heath Young Offenders Institution on 24 March 2002.

The Briefing will focus on the shocking issues surrounding Joseph's death and the treatment of children in the criminal justice system, including sentencing policy and the adequacy of practices, procedures and facilities to safeguard vulnerable children in custody.

Deborah Coles, Co-Director of INQUEST, said:

"This briefing follows the negative response from the Home Office to the call for the public inquiry. Since Joseph's death two more children have died – the public inquiry call is motivated by what is a serious human rights issue, the deaths and suffering of children at the hands of the state."

The need to examine the tragic course of events that led to Joseph's death remains as pressing as ever. 27 children have died in state custody since 1990, but there has never been a public inquiry into any of these deaths.

Yvonne Scholes, Joseph's mother, said:

"When mothers hand over the care of their children to the state, they expect a role to be fulfilled. When a policeman knocks on your door and tells you your son has died whilst in the care of the state, hundreds of questions have to be answered. Only a public inquiry can answer these."

Since the launch of the campaign in November 2003, backing for the public inquiry into Joseph's death has snowballed with over 160 supporters, including children's charities, penal reform groups, leading members of the legal establishment, Peers and MPs. More than 100 MPs have signed an EDM in support of the call.

"Ends"

## **Notes for Editors**

1. The parliamentary briefing will take place on Tuesday 2 November 2004 from 9:30 - 11:00 am in the Jubilee Room, The House of Commons, London SW1A (Houses of Parliament, St. Stephen's Entrance)

2. Speakers will be:

Lord Navnit Dholakia (Chair)

Yvonne Scholes, mother of Joseph

Deborah Coles, Co-Director of INQUEST

Hilton Dawson MP

## **Interview Opportunity**

Yvonne Scholes, Deborah Coles (INQUEST) and Paul Cavadino (Nacro) will be available for media interviews on the day. The family of Adam Rickwood will also be available for interview. Media wishing to arrange an interview or attend the briefing should contact the Media Relations Manager for Nacro, on 020 7840 6497 or the Communications Officer for INQUEST on 020 7263 1111, by Friday 29 October.