

DEATH OF TEENAGER IN FELTHAM YOUNG OFFENDER INSTITUTION **7th September 2000**

Kevin Henson, a seventeen year old remand prisoner at HM Young Offenders' Institute Feltham, was found hanging by an improvised ligature made from torn-up sheeting from an electrical conduit in his cell early in the morning of 6th September.

Since the early 1990s INQUEST has worked with the families of young men who have taken their own lives in Feltham.

Deborah Coles Co Director of INQUEST, said:

"It is difficult to convey my frustration and sadness at this death. The lessons that should have been learnt following the depressing series of suicides at Feltham in the early Nineties have not been learned and another teenager is dead. The responsibility for this death rests with the Prison Service who have failed to heed the warnings about Feltham, and with a criminal justice system that continues to send children to prisons and yet cannot ensure their safety. How is it that a prison with a shocking history of suicide and self-harm allows cells to be in use with accessible ligature points? Juveniles are the group most at risk of suicide and self harm, which makes the use of that cell even more outrageous. I have written to the Prisons Minister Paul Boateng MP asking what action he intends to take over this shocking death."

Only last month, Deputy Governor Ian Thomas resigned his post at Feltham in protest at the disgraceful and overcrowded conditions at the jail which he described as "Dickensian". HM Chief Inspector of Prisons Sir David Ramsbotham also condemned the jail in his inspection report on Feltham. On 23 March this year nineteen-year old Zahid Mubarek was the victim of a racist attack in his cell at Feltham and died 5 days later.

Twelve young offenders aged 21 and under have taken their own lives in prison so far this year, including seventeen year old Philip Griffin in HMYOI Wetherby in August. Three of these deaths have taken place in HMYOI Brindsford. There have been 56 self-inflicted deaths this year.