

JURY GIVE DAMNING VERDICT AGAINST PRISON SERVICE 3rd July 2003

The inquest into the death of Grimsby woman Victoria Winterburn, who died in January last year at New Hall Prison, Wakefield came to an end today - and, according to the solicitor representing Ms Winterburn's family, its verdict of death by misadventure contributed to by neglect has implications for the whole of the Prison Service.

Peter Mahy of Sheffield-based Howells solicitors said the inquest verdict, which was damning, had cited three main areas where the Prison had failed Victoria:

³ There was no doctor on duty in the reception area to prescribe drugs for incoming prisoners suffering from heroin withdrawal symptoms, there should have been a nurse on 24-hour duty to ensure that someone with medical qualifications and experience was available to observe prisoners who were detoxing, and the prison's system for identifying those at risk of self harm was not effective.

³That system is one used by the Prison Service throughout the UK and this verdict means that the whole system should be overhauled to not leave it up to chance that individual prison staff will be able to identify vulnerable prisoners, but would make it the norm for any prisoner who is withdrawing from drugs to be automatically considered at risk for the first 72 hours of their imprisonment.

³ The facts which came out during the inquest certainly raise real concerns about the spate of deaths in New Hall Prison, the most recent of which was Jessica Adams, who died there just ten days ago. This verdict is extremely welcome and offers some relief to Victoria's family. Obviously, nothing can bring Victoria back, but her death and the subsequent inquest have exposed the flaws in the system, which will hopefully now be tackled to prevent similar tragedies occurring in future.²

Deborah Coles Co-Director of INQUEST says:

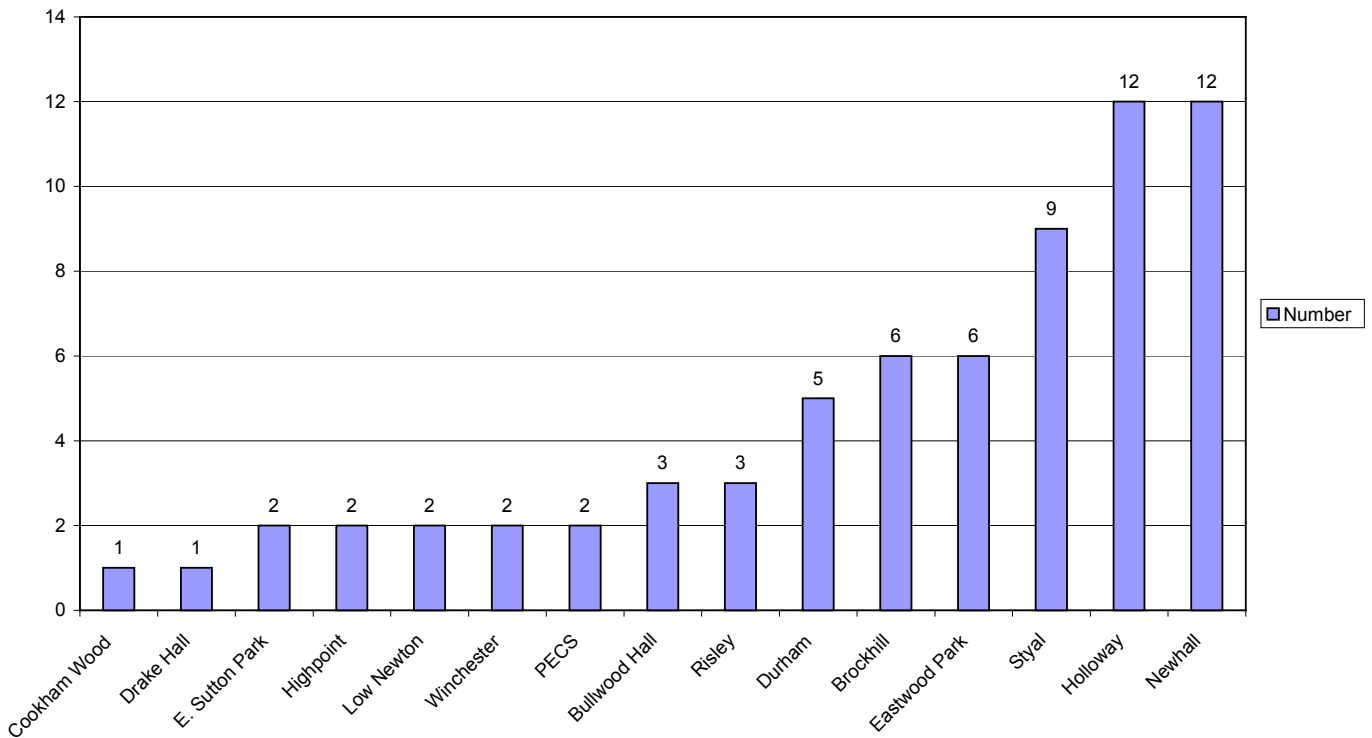
"In the last ten years there have been 9 self inflicted deaths at the women's prison HMP New Hall, 4 of which have occurred in the last 18 months. This comes at a time of a record number of female deaths in the prison system. Today a jury has delivered a verdict of Misadventure contributed by Neglect on the case of Victoria Winterburn, a 21-year-old woman who hung herself in her cell. The jury significantly detailed the lack of a 24-hour nurse, the absence of a doctor on reception and that the suicide prevention system needs overhauling. INQUEST hopes that these conclusions will have a positive impact on future juries empowering them to look closely at the information with which they are presented. INQUEST has constantly argued that whilst the system withstands criticism on paper, in reality it has consistently failed. "

Self-inflicted deaths in HMP Newhall 1994 - date

Name	Age	Date of Death	Classification	Establishment
Jessica Adam	22	21/06/03	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Helena Price	27	14/02/03	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Jacqueline McPartline	32	18/08/02	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Miranda Cox	41	26/01/02	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Victoria Winterburn	21	04/01/02	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Sheena Creamer	22	07/08/00	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Teresa Marie Lohinski	22	07/03/99	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Michelle Wilcox	32	30/05/98	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall
Michelle Pearson	23	05/07/94	Self-Inflicted	HMP New Hall

Source INQUEST Monitoring

Number of Deaths in each prison 1990 - date



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