

Press Release **Embargoed Until Midday Thursday 12th February 2004**

Response to the Report into the death of David ‘Rocky’ Bennett

INQUEST today welcomed the report of Inquiry findings into the death of David Bennett.

Helen Shaw, co-director INQUEST said:

“The government must act now. Patients have continued to die in alarmingly similar circumstances since Rocky died in 1998 and this will not stop unless the recommendations in this report are implemented in full. The time for talking, researching and debating is over. We call on the government not only to accept all its findings but also set out clearly how they will be implemented and when they will report back to us all on the progress that has been made.”

Dr Joanna Bennett said:

“We welcome the inquiry’s recommendations and believe that if they are accepted acted on, there could be a real improvement in the quality of mental health services not only for people from minority ethnic groups but for all service users, their carers and families. My family has been totally vindicated by the inquiry’s findings. We are not just another over-emotional family. We were right to be concerned.”

Sadiq Khan said:

“This is a vindication for the Bennett family and for all of us involved in this area of work. However this is only a start. What we need is an action plan, confirmation of the time scales, ministerial priorities and a committee dedicated to implementing the recommendations. The Bennett family, black and minority ethnic users and the users of the NHS all demand urgent action. Anything else will be a failure.”

Dr Bennett, Helen Shaw and Sadiq Khan will be available for interview after the report conference at midday.

Deaths in Custody and the Use of Force - A Critique

Deaths following the use of force in custodial settings, although small in number, have rightly raised widespread public and political concern. Their investigation has revealed serious shortcomings in the existing mechanisms of legal and democratic accountability. This report documents INQUEST’s work on these cases and related policy issues between 1993 and 2003. It draws attention to the failure of the state to respond effectively to these deaths, the culture of impunity that exists, the fact that black and minority ethnic groups are over-represented amongst those who die, the lack of inter-agency communication and the poor treatment of bereaved families following a death. The report examines the guidance on the use of restraint operating within the police, prison service and NHS. It offers recommendations for change and a political context in which to understand these unacceptable controversial deaths. Deaths in Custody and the Use of Force - A Critique is soon to be available from INQUEST £11 including p&p