

Press Release
Friday January 23rd 2004

INQUEST response to the Ministerial statement on Styal prison and the Ombudsman inquiry

"The six deaths at Styal provide the most harrowing examples of institutional neglect and systemic failings and the failure of the Prison Service to learn valuable lessons. None of the thematic issues of concern raised are new. Time and again inquests reveal individual and systemic failings in the care and management of vulnerable prisoners; impoverished regimes, poor medical care, failings in the care of prisoners with mental health and drug problems and lack of communication between staff.

INQUEST'S frustration and anger is with the lack of accountability following these deaths. Had the lessons been learnt and urgent action taken following previous deaths then subsequent deaths might have been prevented.

Inquests into five of these deaths are yet to take place and will provide the first opportunity for public scrutiny and an opportunity for families to test the evidence gathered as part of the investigations. Following the inquests the Ombudsman report should be revised, made *publicly* available and a further statement made by the Minister as to the steps that have been taken. There is a crisis in women's prisons highlighted by the increasing number of deaths and incidents of self-harm and the numbers of women prisoners with mental health and or drug and alcohol problems. Last year 14 women died in prison and already this year two women have died."

Pauline Campbell, mother of Sarah Campbell who died in HMP Styal on January 18th 2003 said:

"I am appalled that so many women have died before the Home Office has taken any action and I wait to see if this is any more than meaningless rhetoric. I welcome the commitment to better treatment of bereaved families. However support and information must be *immediately* made available to newly bereaved people so that they can make informed choices and effectively participate in the investigation and inquest process."

Deaths of women in prison in the last 5 years

Classification	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
Self-Inflicted	5	8	6	9	14	2	44
Non-Self-Inflicted	4	1	1	2	1	0	9
Awaiting Classification	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

For more information or statistics please contact INQUEST on 020 7263 1111